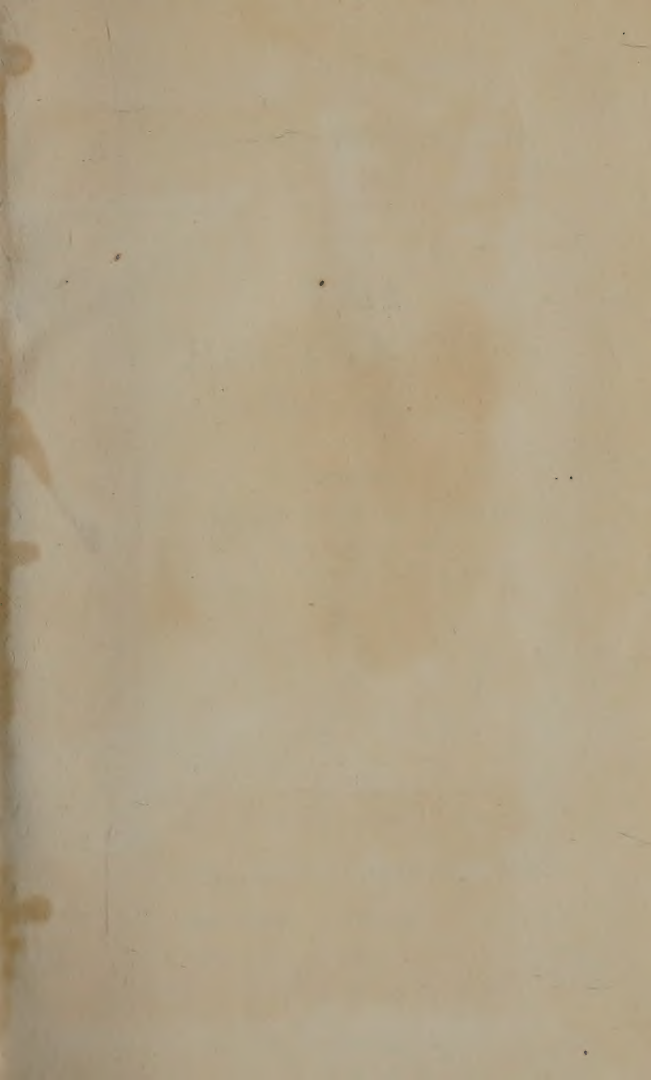
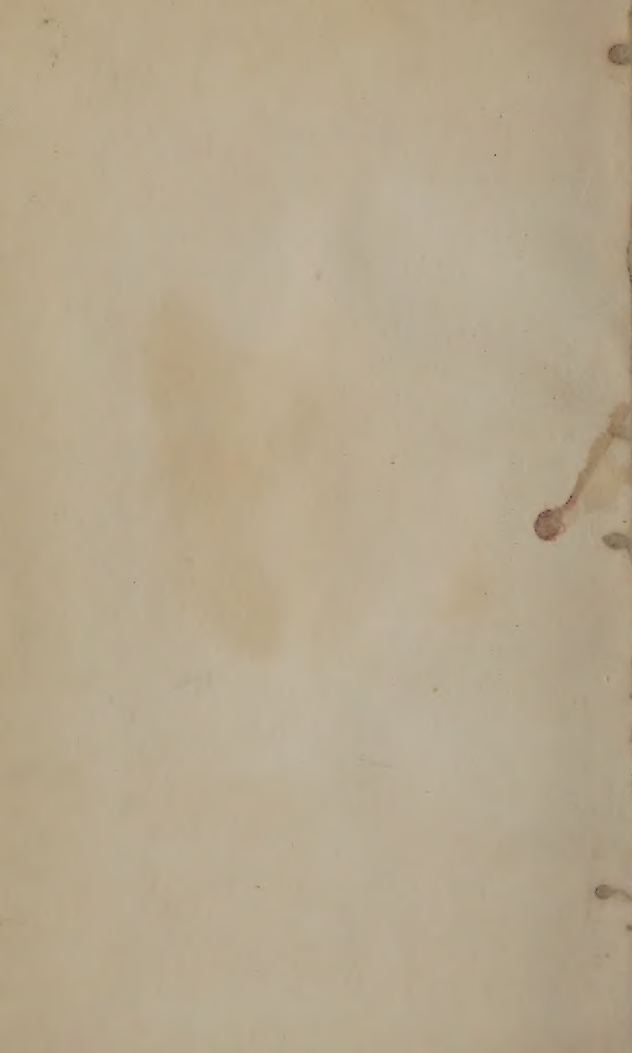








ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE
BEGINNINGS
TO 1500

EDITED BY

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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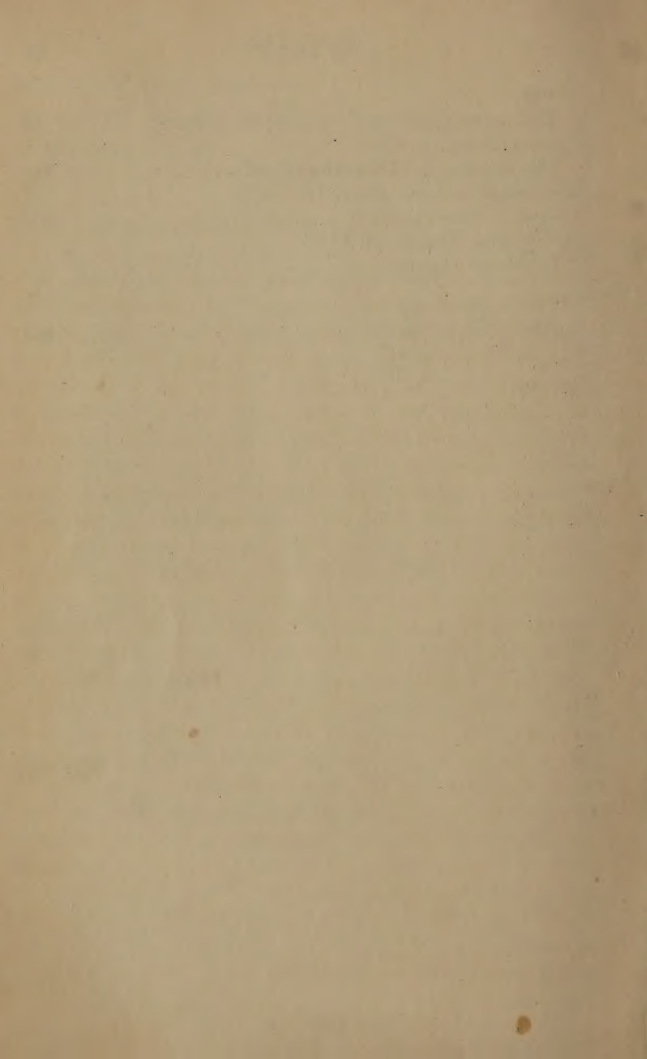
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INTRODUCTION

OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE

ENGLISH literature has been running its course now for more than twelve centuries. An idea of that tremendous sweep of time may be gained by remembering that the history of our country from the American Revolution to the present year covers only one-eighth as much, and even if we reckon back to the death of Shakespeare in 1616 we are, in point of time, only one-quarter on our way!

Changes have taken place of course during those twelve centuries. To such an extent has our language changed that the earliest English writings cannot be understood today except by a student of Old English; new forms of literature have come in; and the subject matter of the present day shows surprising differences from that of the eighth century. To make clearer the course of English literature, then, it is customary to divide it into periods, the dates of which are rather arbitrary, by no means to be taken literally, and determined rather by the state of the language than by the content or form of the literature. The first division is the Old English period, often referred to as the Anglo-Saxon period, extending from some time in the seventh century to about 1100. This is followed by the Middle English period, which comes to a close about the year 1500; and from then on we are in the Modern English period.

To understand properly the beginnings of English

literature it is necessary to know something of the history of Britain in those early days. The reader will recall that in 55 B. C. Julius Caesar invaded Britain. It was not until a hundred years after Caesar's visit, however, that the Romans made a permanent settlement; in 42 A. D. the Emperor Claudius undertook the conquest of the island, and by the end of the century the Romans had conquered as far north as the Forth. Once established, the Romans set up a military government, made physical improvements such as new roads, protecting walls, baths, and villas, remains of which are still to be seen, and probably even left their imprint on the language in such words as street, Chester, port, wall, and wine. But while the Romans were conquering Britain they were having their own difficulties at home; internal dissensions and barbarian invasions caused the withdrawal of the legions from this far-away outpost, and by 410 A. D. the last legion had left the island. The Britons were thus left to govern themselves, and, a task more difficult, to protect themselves. From their inability to hold back the invaders arose, strange to say, our literature.

About the middle of the fifth century and after the withdrawal of the Romans, the Britons were once more invaded—this time by the Angles and Saxons from the northern part of Germany and by the Jutes from Denmark. Bede states that they came over at the invitation of Vortigern, King of Kent, to help against the Picts and the Scots. Whether that be so or not, come they did, and in such force that the country was soon in their hands. These are the peoples who begin English literature. One more element needs to be added: in 597 Augustine led missionaries from Rome to Britain and they began their conversions in Kent. Forty years later Aidan came from Iona into the northern part of Eng-

land, and between the efforts of the missionaries in the north and those in the south, Britain was soon sufficiently converted to be called a Christian country.

Under Christianity letters flourished. From the northern centers of the new religion, especially from Whitby and Jarrow, came some of the outstanding literary figures of the period: Cædmon (end of the seventh century, at Whitby), Bede (673-735, at Jarrow), Alcuin (735-804, at York), and perhaps Cynewulf (late eighth century). The southern centers did not produce at this time any distinguished writers. These schools prospered in the north and south until the close of the eighth century, when the marauding Danes by repeated harryings reduced them to desolation. Alfred finally succeeded in arresting the invaders (in 878, at the battle of Edington), and learning was restored—this time in the south. We shall return to Alfred's program later.

Literature was well nourished in these early days, and although lacking many of the forms that were to develop in the succeeding centuries, includes a copious variety of types. In poetry we have the lyric, short descriptive poems, elegy, paraphrases of Biblical stories, charms, riddles, gnomic verses, battle poetry, and the long narrative poem *Beowulf*; and in prose, history, saints' legends, sermons, translations, and expositions of the rules of priestly conduct, to mention no more. Thus in spite of the primitive conditions of this early society, and in spite too of the many manuscripts that have been lost through vandalism and carelessness, enough material is available today to make the study of it not only profitable to the specialist but of interest to the general reader.

For the present let us disregard the distinctly Christian productions of this period and address ourselves

to a study of the non-Christian poetry. The most significant poem is *Beowulf*, frequently described as the "first English epic." The description needs qualification. To begin with, it was not written in English but in Old English or Anglo-Saxon, which is as difficult for the uninitiated as German or Dutch. It was the language that had been brought by the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, and having been slightly influenced by the language of the native Celts and to a slight degree also by Latin, developed into what we now know as Old English. The first three lines of *Beowulf* will serve as an example:

HWÆT, wē Gār-Dena in gēardagum
 þēodecyninga þrym gefrūnon,
 hū ḡā æþelingas ellen fremedon.

(Hail! We have heard of the greatness in days past of the kings of the Spear-Danes, of how the nobles did mighty deeds!)

Furthermore, to continue the qualification, the material is not English: the scenes are laid in Denmark and Sweden; and the characters are not native to England, but are continental. In other words, the invaders brought with them the traditions which took shape in *Beowulf*. The poem was written probably in the first quarter of the eighth century, and the manuscript of it dates from the end of the tenth; the author is unknown. There is only a slight historical basis for the poem.

Beowulf is the fullest expression in verse of Old English values that has come down to us. As one might expect of such a society of roving, sea-faring, plundering warriors, physical prowess is one of the main virtues. *Beowulf*, the hero, has the strength of thirty men; he vanquishes the monster Grendel without weapons, pur-

sues his dam to her lair and kills her, swims the ocean clad in his mail and beset by sea-monsters—and swims for five nights, too—and finally, after having ruled his people for fifty years, gives up his life for them in slaying another dragon. That keynote, struck so boldly in this early poem, sounds throughout Old English poetry. Years after the probable date of the composition of *Beowulf* we find in the *Battle of Brunanburh* (937) and in the *Battle of Maldon* (991) the same exaltation of the fighting man, the same willingness for personal encounter, the same zest for the clash of arms.

But a fighting man dealing blows right and left, careless of whom he struck, was by no means the ideal. The warrior must be true to his lord, to his kinsmen, to his word, and thus we find loyalty as a second prominent virtue. Beowulf fulfills the vow he had made with Breca to swim the ocean; he slays Grendel, as he had promised; and he bitingly silences Unferth by referring to his disloyalty to his kinsmen. In return for his faithfulness, the warrior expected of course to be rewarded. Mean was the earl who refused to expend rings and swords on his followers. The king, we are told in *Beowulf*, who generously rewards his men, binds faithful followers to himself for times of stress.

Even the casual reader of these pagan poems notices the strange injection of Christian material. In *Beowulf* we learn that Cain is the father of the ravaging monsters. God sends Beowulf as a help to the people. Beowulf, dying, gives thanks to the "God of Glory." These, and many other examples, are curious footprints of time dating clearly enough from the Christianizing of the country, and are the pious and not very happy additions of the monks. The pagan element is naturally very strong. Wyrð (Fate) rules all things. It often spares a "good man not yet doomed, if his

strength avail;" but no man can withstand Wyrð when it comes for him. The mighty Wyrð, so the *Wanderer* runs, brings hardship on the earth; in the *Ruined City* Wyrð causes all glorious things to decay. And Beowulf, having thanked God for the dragon's treasure, laments that Wyrð has overwhelmed the line of the Wægmundings. Throughout this early poetry there is none of the introspection, the doubts, the qualms of the ethically undecided that we find in later poetry. The philosophy of life is clear. Strength counts, and loyalty counts, and generosity counts—but Wyrð rules all. And just as this pagan poetry as a whole lacks embellishments and is told simply and directly, so this philosophy is set forth without debate or qualifications. Yet there is a certain melancholy in many of these poems, the melancholy that Tennyson summed up in the tragic line: *Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath*.

Who wrote all these poems we do not know. Probably they are the songs, the recitations, of the scop, the singer-poet who occupied an honored place at the king's table. "There was heard the clear sound of the harp, the song of the gleeman" is the line in *Beowulf*, and the sequel informs us that the scop told of the forming of the earth. So likewise the scop would sing the deeds of his lord. *Widsith*, probably the oldest Old English poem, tells not very veraciously of the wide wanderings of such a poet, and *Deor's Lament* is the cry of the scop who has been cut off from the favors of his lord by one more skilful than he.

There is a certain directness, a literal stating of facts, a pruning of the expression that is quite refreshing in much of this early writing. In our later poetry we expect expansion and detail. Not so in these poems. Notice how swiftly Beowulf's men put off from shore, land, pass the sentinel, and enter Heorot, or how quickly

the fight with Grendel is told. And still there is a certain redundancy, a repetitiousness that today we should say came from a lack of filing, and there is a wealth of vocabulary—observe the many synonyms for the sea—that is quite surprising.

The quality of these poems varies, of course. Many of the gnomic verses are merely trite statements of fact. The *Love-Letter* approaches daintiness; the *Banished Wife's Complaint* and *Deor's Lament* are plangent; the *Riddles*, some ninety-five in number, are interesting examples of the guess literature found all over the world; and the *Battle of Brunanburh* stirred Tennyson to translate it.

Old English poetry dispenses with rhyme, but has its own conventions, nevertheless. The unit is the line, which is broken into two parts by a cæsura (i.e., a pause). Each half line has two heavily stressed accents and a varying number of unaccented syllables, and the halves are joined by alliteration—that is, an important word in the first half of the line has the same initial letter as an important word in the second half. Thus:

<i>Lixte se leoma</i>	<i>leoht inne stod.</i>
<i>Heard be hiltum</i>	<i>Higelaces þegn</i>
<i>god and geatolic</i>	<i>giganta geweorc</i>

The 3182 lines of *Beowulf*, as well as the rest of Old English poetry, preserve these conventions, and certain variations of them, with surprising care. Indeed, such is the attention given to style that the verse of this period, early as that verse is, shows decided evidence of decadence.

Christian poetry of this period is represented by two poets—*Cædmon*, from Whitby, in the seventh century, and *Cynewulf*, perhaps a Northumbrian also, in the

eighth. All that we know of the life of the former has been told by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History*. He tells how Cædmon, having slipped away from a feast, was visited by an angel and under his heavenly guidance composed his poems. Four poems have been ascribed to Cædmon and are now known as *Cædmon's Paraphrase*; present day scholarship does not assign them to him, however. In the longest of these poems, the *Genesis*, the poet sings of Creation, and at times with surprising power. His descriptions of the revolt of the angels, of the temptation scene, and of the flood are among his best; readers of Milton's *Paradise Lost* are struck by the similarity between the *Genesis* and the later epic. In these paraphrases Biblical material is expanded, embellished, and adapted to the times. His patriarch is really an Anglo-Saxon king, the leader of his men in battle, the dispenser of gifts. In the *Exodus* the wanderings of the Israelites form the subject; in *Daniel*, we have the struggles of the Jews with Nebuchadnezzar; and in *Christ and Satan*, the lament of the fallen angels, the harrowing of hell, and the temptation.

Of the two poets Cynewulf has always been the more favored, because we can see in his poetry the wistful singer that he was, and the lover of beauty. He is much the more personal poet of the two. Whether he was bishop or minstrel we do not know; he seems to have undergone a conversion and been convinced of the sinfulness of his youth; in his maturity he realized how fleeting the beauties of earth are, how imminent death is, and that God is merciful and just. The very mind of Cynewulf, not to take into account the advance of his style, is a product of a refined and cultured community.

Just what poems Cynewulf wrote is a matter of doubt. At one time most of the outstanding poems of the period were attributed to him, but at the present

time only four poems are considered as his work, poems which he signed with a runic¹ signature: *Juliana*, describing the martyrdom of a fourth century saint; *Elene*, relating the journey of Saint Helena to Jerusalem and her finding of the Cross; *The Fates of the Apostles*, telling very briefly the lives of the apostles; and finally the *Christ* with its beautiful passages on the Advent and the Ascension, and the powerful account of Doomsday. Two other poems of the period, the *Phoenix* and the *Dream of the Rood*, used to be assigned to Cynewulf, but the authorship is doubtful. The latter is the more poetic of the two.

The name of Bede (673-735) has already been mentioned. The Venerable Bede, monk, scholar, historian, and teacher is a towering figure of this period. All of his work, except a translation of the Gospel of Saint John, was written in Latin. Of his many writings the most important are the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*; the *De Natura Rerum*, a scientific treatise, long popular; and his *Lives of the Saints*. It was not so much any one work by Bede, however, but rather what we may call his whole scholarly personality that set him apart and made him a tremendous influence. Not only was he familiar with Greek and Latin and some Hebrew, but he had covered the scientific material of his day, and was well versed in Biblical lore. About him at Jarrow are said to have gathered some six hundred scholars. One of them, Egbert, founded the school at York, famous for its learned men; and one of Egbert's pupils, Alcuin, became Charlemagne's mainstay in his educational program. Bede's mind was of that capacious sort which we have come to associate with the scholars and artists of the Renaissance.

It was not from Bede but from Alfred (849-901) that Old English prose derived its greatest stimulus. After

¹ The letters of the ancient Teutonic alphabet are called *runes*.

his repulse of the Danes, Alfred was able to turn his energies not only to the physical improvement of the country but to literature, too, and thanks to him learning flourished once again as it had a century before. Times were sadly changed, though. Britain, instead of sending scholars abroad to educate her neighbors, was in dire need of men to lead the movement, and Alfred was forced to send to the continent for scholars. Under his direction translations were made: *The Pastoral Care* of Pope Gregory, a handbook for the clergy; Orosius's *History of the World*; and the *Consolation of Philosophy*, by a sixth century Roman senator, Boethius. We may credit Alfred also, in all probability, with changing the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* from a perfunctory and often fictitious account of English history to a literary monument, an actual history of his own times, and, as carried on by his successors, of the next two centuries and a half.

Important too in this later period is Ælfric (c. 955-1020?), the author of the *Homilies*, eighty-five in number, forceful, dignified examples of Old English prose at its best, and of the *Lives of the Saints*. His *Glossary and Colloquy* should be mentioned as a sample of the text-book of the day.

On the whole this later period is one of prose. The significant poetry of the Old English period had long before been produced in the north. Yet too much credit cannot be given to the southern centers of learning: they clearly preserved a love of letters during a most turbulent time.

MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE

The literature of the Middle English period (1100-1500) is extensive and varied, and compared with that

of the preceding period offers many new problems. In the first place, much more has come down to us from this second period than from the first. Then again, new subject matter has been introduced, and many new forms, such as the ballad, the play, and the romance have come in. To the Christian influence which was so important in Old English literature, and which continued in the following period unabated in force, is to be added a second and equally important influence, the French. In regard to extent of time the two periods are about equal, but the later is much more prolific. And finally, the conditions of the Middle English period are, as we should expect of a transitional era, much more complicated: the economic, political, and religious questions were by no means so clear-cut as they had been. All these elements then have contributed to make the study of Middle English literature by no means simple.

Story telling now came into its own, and, thanks to the French influence, underwent important modifications. This influence (subsequent, of course, to the Norman Conquest, 1066) softened the tone of English narrative, gave new material to work with, supplied a fresh technique, and on the whole added a more courtly, worldly-wise character to what are now called romances—long narratives in verse. No longer the brevity of *Beowulf* and, as we may say, the reckless waste of situation in that poem. Fullness of description was now required; we see the characters from many angles; the background is filled in with much detail, and the narrators often feel obliged to go back in history and sketch in all that books (and frequently imagination) supply.

In the Middle Ages there were various cycles of romances, of which the Arthurian is the most important. We shall accordingly confine our discussion to it.

First, the chronology of the writers on Arthurian material. About the middle of the twelfth century, Geoffrey of Monmouth, an archdeacon at Monmouth, and probably a Welshman, wrote his *History of the Kings of Britain*. We are not concerned with the authenticity of Geoffrey's work: whether he did or did not translate an ancient account written in Cymric, nor shall we complain with a writer at the end of the twelfth century that he has "made the little finger of his Arthur stouter than the back of Alexander." The significant point is that Geoffrey made of Arthur an important figure. This account was written in Latin; it was translated into Anglo-Norman verse by Geoffrey Gaimar, but his version was quickly superseded by Wace's French translation, completed in 1155 and called *Li Romans de Brut*. We come down now fifty years to Layamon, a priest in Worcestershire, who reworked Wace's translation, and, doubling it, produced his *Brut*. To him we owe a detailed description of the origin of the Round Table; in the *Brut* also Arthur stands forth more like an English than a French king; and in the account of the death of Arthur something of that mysticism has been introduced that we now associate with his passing.

The Arthurian cycle was very popular in the twelfth century and in the following. In France Chrétien de Troyes (middle of the twelfth century) is the outstanding poet; in England and France there were numerous *lais*, and romances both in verse and in prose. Of the metrical romances the best is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, written shortly after the middle of the fourteenth century by an unknown author.

By the time that Sir Thomas Malory wrote his *Morte Darthur* (completed about 1470, published by Caxton in 1485), the material had been worked and re-worked. Added to early and quite simple accounts of Arthur,

a British chieftain of the fifth century, were those other stories which today we find so significant: the Grail story, the love story of Tristram and Iseult, the story of Lancelot, the story of the magician Merlin. Other additions there are, but these are the most important. And so with much spade work done for him—and with so many blossoms to gather, too—Malory wrote his prose version. The wealth of material was of course embarrassing to Malory, and the reader of today is frequently conscious of the stringing out of episodes, the multiplying of effects without the expected emphasis, and above all the failure to make Arthur a dynamic, all-engrossing personality. But these defects a lover of Malory forgets and finds in the *Morte Darthur* the speed of narrative, the clear-cut delineation of Lancelot and Guinevere, the sweep of events, the quaintness of diction, and the personal, live touches that have made the work one of the living books of English literature.

To us today the Arthurian cycle is not merely a series of episodes: it is a group of symbols, a repository of the ideals of successive ages, an exposition in narrative of the mysticism and wonder which all of us at some time feel, and of those perennial human relationships which are the joy and tragedy of life.

Romances, as we have said, abounded in the Middle English period; they supplied the place of the novel of today. *King Horn* (antedating, probably, 1250, although the manuscript is about 1310) tells the story of the love of Horn for "King Aylmar's" daughter, Rimenhild, his banishment because of his love, his return and killing of a false friend, and his subsequent reunion with his lady. *Havelok the Dane* (composed before 1300) recounts in quaint and homely fashion the trials of Havelok and Goldeburgh, misused royal children, their marriage, and Havelok's revenge on his enemies. *The Squyr of*

Lowe Degre (c. 1450?) is the old story of the humble serving-man marrying the king's daughter. There is life in these stories and a pleasing zest.

But what of the church influence? Some there is of course, in these romances; God (not Wyrð by this time) rules, and it should be added, Cupid does too. But it is not in the romances that we find evidences of monkish handling: it is in the long and labored homilies and treatises of the period. The *Ormulum* (c. 1215) explains the portions of the Bible used in daily services; it is most complete, over ten thousand lines having come down to us, and is very dull. The *Ancren Riwle* (c. 1220) emphasises the love of Jesus and the joys to be found in religion. Robert Manning of Brunne wrote the *Handlyng Synne* (1303) explaining the commandments and illustrating with tales; in parts it is quite readable. The author of the *Cursor Mundi* (not known) tells us (c. 1300) that "All this world, ere this book ends, with Christ's help I shall run over"—to review for us the proper religious attitude and to retell stories from the Bible. Richard Rolle of Hampole's *Prick of Conscience*, important in its day as a religious influence, treats of the wickedness of man, the temptations of this world, and of judgment. In 1340 Dan Michel, in his *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (*Prick of Conscience*) describes the seven deadly sins as a tree, the twigs of which are the minor sins. It is tedious and wordy. And then, like a beautiful stream of light, the *Pearl* (c. 1370) gleams forth from the general dullness of these analyses, a charming expression of the love of a man for a lost child and for God. The depth of feeling in this poem is not surpassed by any writing of the period. Unfortunately, the author is unknown.

The influence of the church has been particularly noticeable also on the development of the drama; indeed,

one wonders how the drama would have got its start without the church.

To find the origin of the English drama we must go even beyond the Norman Conquest. Imagine yourself attending an Easter Day mass at the end of the tenth century. A simple colloquy is introduced as part of the service: the three Marys are asked by the angels, "Whom seek you?" And they answer, "Jesus of Nazareth." In turn the angels reply, "He is not here, he is risen." That approximately is a specimen of our first drama! The text of this "play" is from a French manuscript, but of the sort that was in use in the early English church. From it, simple as it is, has developed the vast dramatic literature which is such an important part of English letters.

For the next three centuries (during the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the greater part of the thirteenth) the drama was almost entirely in the hands of the clergy. As the drama developed it became less sacred in character, and with the addition of secular elements—non-Biblical figures, clowns, native types—instead of being performed in the church proper was gradually removed to the churchyard, and from the churchyard to the town. Equipment became more elaborate. Carts drawn by horses were used for stages. Simple stage-settings such as the mouth of hell and a conventional representation of heaven were introduced. The guilds in the various towns were called on to present plays; thus, the water-landers would present *Noah's Flood*, the cappers and linen drapers *Balaam and His Ass*. Originally called *Corpus Christi* plays or *Whitsun* plays, because performed on those church festivals, these plays are now known as *mystery* plays. The subject matter is Biblical: the sacrifice of Isaac, the Creation, the Slaughter of the Innocents, for example. Cycles of these plays were

composed, the best known being the *York* (from a fifteenth century manuscript, including forty-nine plays), the *Wakefield* or *Townley* (from the second half of the fifteenth century, including thirty-two plays), the *Ches-ter* (the oldest cycle, although the manuscript is late, some twenty-five plays), and the *Coventry* (the manuscript dating from 1468 and the cycle running to a little over forty plays).

Miracle plays dealing with the lives of the saints were popular also. The earliest is probably the play of *Saint Katharine*, at the beginning of the twelfth century. They were performed as late as the first quarter of the sixteenth century. After the mysteries and the miracle plays come the moralties: a dramatization of the conflict of good and evil for the possession of the soul of man. For the most part they are quite tiresome, although *Everyman* has now attained the rank of a classic. After the moralities comes another type, the interludes, generally brief and often farcical. By the time the drama had undergone these various changes it was ready for the skilled hands of the Elizabethan playwrights.

But the literature of the Middle English period has more than romance and drama to its credit. It has its grace notes, too. Some of our most delightful lyrics date from this period. Many of them are religious in character and have the Virgin Mary as the central theme. Others, and they are the lyrics that have survived by the appreciation of readers, show a fondness for nature and exhibit a pleasing vein of sentiment. Ballads, also, take their rise in this period. Of unknown authorship and of doubtful origin, they have continued for centuries to please by their freshness and quaintness.

All this earlier literature would seem to have been the preparation for the work of the great poet of the

period, Geoffrey Chaucer. All that the monks had done to preserve and to encourage literature; the amalgamation of the French with the English; the interest in the romance; the development of the lyric; and the handling and refining of the language, all these elements contributed to the success of Chaucer (c. 1340-1400). Born in London—his father was a wine-merchant—he became a page in the household of the Duchess of Clarence in his seventeenth year. Two years were spent in France with the army of Edward III. Chaucer was made a prisoner, ransomed, and returned to England to spend the next ten years at the court of Edward III. It was but natural that he should have written first in the manner of the poets of the courts of love and that the courtly, French influence should have been the first important influence on him. The “ballades, roundels, and virelays,” and his translation, probably not completed, of the *Romaunt of the Rose* show this influence; so too does the *Book of the Duchess* (1369), a typical French love-vision which in Chaucer’s hands becomes a poignant elegy in which he laments the death of John of Gaunt’s first wife. The second important influence was the Italian. In 1372 and again in 1375 Chaucer went on diplomatic missions to Italy, during the hey-day, that is, of the Italian Renaissance. To this time (1375-1385) belong the *House of Fame*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the *Legend of Good Women*. But it is by the *Canterbury Tales* (begun about 1387) that Chaucer is best known today, and rightly so. Once more Chaucer appropriated a medieval convention—the gathering together of a number of men and women in order to have each one tell a tale. Chaucer was able, however, to eliminate much of the creaking machinery that is generally found in such collections of tales, or rather,

the vividness of the writing makes us forget the machinery. In the *Prologue* the poet tells how he fell in with a group of pilgrims who were going to Canterbury, "Wel nyne and twenty in a companye." Then, having sketched inimitably the members of the group, he has the host, Harry Bailey, propose a supper, at the expense of the group, to the one who tells the best story. The host suggests that each one tell two stories on the way to Canterbury and two on the return: but Chaucer completed less than a fifth of the whole. The *Canterbury Tales* are truly remarkable: in them Chaucer's careful observation of medieval types, clerical and lay, his supreme gift as a story teller, his sensitiveness to shadings in character, his tenderness and at times his raciness, but above all his ability to present men and women who are actually alive and not mere puppets introduced to tell stories, place the *Canterbury Tales* in a rank that is not approached by any other collection of tales of the period.

Contemporary with Chaucer is John Gower (1325?-1408), not so versatile an artist, to be sure, and obviously trammelled by many of the medieval conventions of form and thought, but a figure of much interest. Gower wrote three works, each in a different language. The *Speculum Meditantis*, in French, sets forth in typical medieval fashion the seven deadly sins, and exhibits the existing corrupt conditions in London. The *Confessio Amantis*, in English, is a group of stories on the deadly sins. In the *Vox Clamantis*, written in Latin, Gower as an aristocrat arraigns the condition of the people and dwells at length on the evils of the time. Additional light is shed on the period by the *Vision of Piers the Plowman*, formerly attributed to William Langland, but now considered to be the work of various hands. Here we have a full and bitter criticism of the social struc-

ture of the fourteenth century. The wretched condition of the laboring man and the corruption of the courts and of the church are frankly assailed. The point of view is that of one of the masses, and sympathy is consequently directed to the people.

While the main emphasis in any account of the literature of Middle English must fall upon poetry, the prose of the time may not be neglected. We have said something already about the greatest prose work of the period—Malory's *Morte Darthur*. But the fourteenth century can show other great prose writers, particularly John Wycliff (1320?-1384), one of the most influential preachers that England has produced, a friend of the people, a castigator of the evil doers of his day, but above all the translator, with assistance, of the Bible. At the opposite pole from the writings of Wycliff is the *Voyage and Travel of Sir John Mandeville*, originally written in French, translated into English, and one of the most delightfully extravagant accounts that we have.

Suitably enough, the period closes with William Caxton, the first to introduce printing into England (1476). Through his labors much of the best literature of the century, and his own translations in addition, were made available to a wide range of readers. Caxton printed the *Canterbury Tales*, the works of Lydgate and of Gower, Malory's *Morte Darthur*, and numerous romances. His own translations into a lucid and vigorous English helped much to shape English prose.

JAMES DOW MCCALLUM.

**OLD ENGLISH
LITERATURE**

BEOWULF

HAIL! We have heard of the greatness in days past of the kings of the Spear-Danes, of how the nobles did mighty deeds!

Often Scyld Scefing wrested the mead-benches from his foes, from many tribes. He terrified the warriors, but that was after he had been found friendless. For that humiliation he was consoled, throve under the heavens, grew great in honor, until all those neighboring across the whale road had to obey him and yield tribute. That was a good king!

To him later was born a son, a child in the house, whom God sent as a comfort to the people, because He saw the trouble which they had formerly suffered when for a long time they had been without a king. Therefore the Lord of Life, the Ruler of Glory, gave him honor on earth. Beowulf, the son of Scyld, was renowned, his fame spread far in the Scedelands. So shall a young man wisely insure, by lavish gifts while in his father's house, that later in old age when war comes, willing comrades will stand by, the people aid him. In every nation a man shall grow powerful through praiseworthy deeds.

At the fated hour Scyld the valiant departed into the Lord's keeping. Staunch comrades bore him to the sea, as he himself had commanded while he, the friend of the Scyldings, ruled them. The beloved lord held sway a long time. There at the dock lay the ring-prowed vessel, the noble's ship, glistening bright and ready to sail. They laid their dear lord, the giver of

rings, in the bosom of the ship, laid the hero by the mast. Great treasure was there, wealth gathered from distant lands. Never heard I of a ship more splendidly fitted out with weapons and battle-gear, with swords and coats-of-mail. On his bosom rested much treasure that was to go far away with him into the power of the flood. They adorned him with no fewer gifts, with no less treasure, than did they who in the beginning sent him, still a child, alone over the sea. Then too, they set by him, high over head, a gold-embroidered standard, let the waves bear him, gave him to the sea. Sad were they at heart, troubled in mind. Men could not truly say, hall-councillors, heroes under heaven, who received that burden.

For a long time Beowulf of the Scyldings, the loved lord, was famous in the strongholds among the nations—his father had gone elsewhere, the ruler from the earth—until in time the exalted Healfdene was born to him. While he lived, old and fierce in battle, he ruled the Scyldings with kindness. To him, leader of hosts, four children were born, reckoned in order: Heorogar, and Hrothgar, and Halga the Good; I heard that——was Onela's queen,¹ the consort of the War-Scylding.

Then Hrothgar was granted victory in battle, glory in war, so that his retainers eagerly obeyed him, till the young warriors grew strong, a mighty host.

It came into his mind that he would command men to build a hall-building, a huge mead-house, greater than any one had ever heard of, and that within it he should dispense to young and old whatever God had given him, except the folk-land and his power of life and death. Then, as I have heard, the work was apportioned to many a nation over this earth, to adorn

¹ A defective line.

this meeting-place of the people. In time, and quickly, it was completed, the greatest of halls. The scop named it Heorot (Stag Head), he who had power far and wide with his word. Hrothgar did not break his promise; he dispensed rings and treasure at the feast. The hall towered, high and broad-gabled; it awaited the ravaging surges of hostile fire; and it was not a long time after that deadly hatred broke out between son-in-law and father-in-law.

Then the mighty demon that dwelt in darkness could hardly endure to hear each day the loud rejoicing in the hall. The sound of the harp was there, the clear song of the scop. He who could tell of the distant creation of man said that the Almighty created the earth, the bright beautiful plain which the waters encompass, and that, glorying in triumph, He placed sun and moon, luminaries as light to the dwellers on earth, and adorned the quarters of the earth with boughs and leaves, and gave life to every thing that moves.

So the warriors lived in joy and plenty until one, a fiend of hell, began to do evil. The grim monster, the dreaded wanderer of waste places, was called Grendel, he who haunted the moors, the fens, and the wilderness. The unblessed man had for a long while occupied the abode of monsters after the Creator had proscribed him. On the descendants of Cain the Eternal Ruler avenged the slaughter of Abel. Cain did not profit in that feud, for God banished him far, exiled him from mankind for that crime. Hence arose all monsters, eotens and elves and evil spirits, and giants too, who warred against God for a long while. God gave them a reward for that!

Well, after nightfall, Grendel spied on the high house to see how the Ring Danes had quartered themselves after their beer-drinking. Within he found the band

of warriors sleeping after the feast; they knew nothing of sorrow, the hard lot of mankind. The evil spirit, grim and greedy, savage and cruel, was soon busy. Thirty warriors he seized as they slept, and rejoicing in his booty set out for his home, to visit his dwelling with his fill of slaughter.

Then at dawn, with break of day, Grendel's war-craft was clear to men. After festivity was lamentation, a great cry in the morning. The famous ruler, the honored ætheling, sat mourning, the mighty one suffered, sorrowed for his thanes, after they viewed the tracks of the loathly one, the evil spirit. That struggle was too bitter, horrible, and long. Only a night went by before he wrought a greater carnage, and he felt no regret for his violence and crime; he was too used to it. Then it was easy to find some one who had sought a sleeping-place further off, a bed in the rooms, since the hatred of the hall-thane was revealed, was in truth made known plainly. Whoever had escaped the fiend kept himself afterwards far off and secure. So Grendel ruled and battled wrongfully, one against all, until the finest of houses stood empty. For a long while, for twelve winters, the lord of the Scyldings suffered grief, every woe, endless sorrows. Thus it became known in sad songs to the sons of men that Grendel warred now and then against Hrothgar, that he waged a bitter battle, evil and feuds, for many seasons, continual strife. He would not make peace with any Dane, turn aside this deadly danger, or be bought off, and none of the counsellors could hope for better fortune at the hands of the slayer. The monster, the dark death-shadow, continued to persecute; he lay in wait for and ambushed young and old. In darkness he ruled the misty moors. Men do not know whither demons stalk in their wanderings.

So the foe of mankind, the dreadful solitary one, often committed many crimes, bitter afflictions. On black nights he dwelt in Heorot, the gold-adorned hall. He might not approach the throne, a treasure before the Lord, or know His purpose.

That was a great trial and sorrow to the lord of the Scyldings. Many a mighty one sat often in council, conferred on the best plan for bold warriors to follow against the sudden attacks. Sometimes they vowed sacrifices in the temples of idols, prayed that the Devil would grant them relief in their great distress. That was their custom, the solace of the heathen. They trusted in hell; they did not know the Lord, Judge of Deeds, they knew not the Lord God; they could not praise the Lord of Heaven, the Ruler of Glory. Woe to him who must plunge his soul in dire perversity into the abyss of fire, hope for no comfort, no return. Well shall it be for him who, after his death, may seek the Lord and ask for peace in the bosom of the Father.

Thus unceasingly the son of Healfdene was tossed about by his trouble; the wise man could not avert his sorrow. That struggle was too bitter, loathsome and long which afflicted the people: violent persecution, the greatest of nocturnal pests.

This about Grendel's deeds a thane of Hygelac learned in his land, the brave one among the Geats. Of all men he was the strongest in this life's-day, noble and powerful. He ordered a vessel, a good one, outfitted, said he would seek the war-king, the famous prince, over the swan's-road since Hrothgar needed men. Wise men did not blame him at all, though he was dear to them. They encouraged the valiant one, observed auguries. The hero had chosen picked men of the Geats, of the bravest he could find; with fourteen men he embarked. A warrior skilled in the sea pointed

out the landmarks. Time passed. The ship was on the waves, the boat under the cliff. The warriors eagerly mounted to the prow. The currents eddied, waves against sand. The men bore into the hold of the vessel the bright armor, the splendid weapons. The men, warriors on their willing journey, shoved off. The foamy-necked vessel, likest to a bird, bounded over the swelling waters urged on by the wind, until in due time on the second day the curved prow had sailed so far that the seafarers saw land, saw the sea-cliffs glisten, the steep hills, the bold headlands. Then was the ocean crossed, the journey over.

Quickly then the Weder-folk climbed ashore, made fast the ship. Their coats-of-mail, their war-gear, rattled. They thanked God that the ocean path had been easy for them. Then from his rampart the Scylding guard, he who patrolled the sea-cliffs, saw bright shields, ready armor, brought down the gangway. Curiosity seized him: who could they be? So the thane of Hrothgar rode on his horse to the shore, shook mightily his strong spear, and said in formal speech: "What men are you bearing armor, equipped in mail, who thus come guiding your steep ship over the ocean-paths hither, over the waves? Know that for a long while I have guarded this outpost, kept watch by the sea that no enemy with sea-force might harm the land of the Danes. Shield-bearers have never tried to land here more openly. You certainly do not have the permission of the warriors, consent of kinsmen. Never have I seen a greater leader on earth than one of your number, the warrior in his armor. He is no retainer clothed in armor, unless his looks, his distinguished bearing, belie him. Now I must know whence you come before you proceed further as spies into the land of the Danes.

Strangers, seafarers, hear my outspoken opinion: it is best to make known quickly where you come from."

The chief answered, the leader of the band unlocked his word-hoard: "We are Geats and hearth-companions of Hygelac. My father was known among nations, a noble chief called Ecgtheow. He lived many years before he went his way, an old man from his dwelling. Noble men far and wide gladly recall him. In friendship we have sought your lord, the son of Healfdene, the guardian of his people. Help us with your advice. We have an important message for the famous king of the Danes; there is no need to keep it a secret, I suppose. You know if it is as we have heard for a truth, that there is among the Scyldings some monster—I know not what—a mysterious ravager, who on dark nights carries on in malice unheard-of persecutions, injuries, and slaughter. I can with open heart counsel Hrothgar in this matter, how he, wise and good, may overcome the enemy, provided that his distresses are destined to cease, relief come for affliction, and the surgings of sorrow to grow cooler. Otherwise he shall suffer forever his season of woe, bitter sorrow, as long as the fairest of houses stands high."

The guard, the fearless warrior, seated on his horse, answered: "A sharp warrior, one who does his duty, must distinguish between words and actions. I understand that this company is friendly to the lord of the Scyldings. Forward march, with your weapons and armor. I will guide you. Furthermore, I will command my kinsmen to guard your boat against every enemy, to watch faithfully the new-tarred vessel on the beach until she bears again her loved pilot over the ocean to the land of the Weders. Such a well-intentioned man is allowed to come unscathed out of the rush of battle."

They proceeded. The boat remained still, the broad-beamed vessel rode on her cable, fast at anchor. The boar's head shone over the cheek guards, covered with gold, adorned and hard-welded, kept guard over brave men. The men hastened on, pushed on together until they saw the timbered hall, splendid and glittering with gold. To dwellers on earth that was the most famous hall under the skies, that in which the ruler lived. Its gleam shone over many lands. Then the courageous one pointed out the bright dwelling of brave men that they might advance toward it. The war-hero turned his horse and spoke: "It is time for me to go. May the Almighty Father graciously guard you in your ventures. I will go to the sea to keep guard against a hostile force."

The street was paved with stone; the path guided the company. The battle-corselets shone, hard and hand-linked; the bright iron ring sang in the corselets as they marched on in their war-gear to the hall. The seaweary men ranged their broad shields, their hard bucklers, against the wall of the building. They sat on the benches—their coats-of-mail sang, war-coats of warriors. The spears stood stacked together, seafarers' weapons, the ashwood gray at the tip. The armed troop was well equipped with weapons.

Then a proud hero questioned the warriors about their kindred: "Whence bring you ornamental shields, gray shirts of mail, and helmets, a pile of war spears? I am Hrothgar's herald and officer. Never have I seen foreigners, so many men, more courageous. I think that you have sought Hrothgar in daring, not in distress but in generosity." To him replied the famous mighty one, the bold man of the Weders, spoke after him, brave under his helmet: "We are Hygelac's table-companions. Beowulf is my name. I will tell my mes-

sage to the son of Healfdene, to the famous prince your lord, if he will permit us to greet his gracious self."

Wulfgar answered (he was a Vendel)—his spirit, his valor, and his wisdom had been proved to many: "I wish to question the lord of the Danes, the leader of the Scyldings, the dispenser of rings, the renowned prince, about your visit, as you ask, and will at once make known the answer which the brave man thinks proper to give me."

Then he turned quickly to the place where Hrothgar sat, old and hoary, with his following of nobles; the brave one advanced until he stood facing the lord of the Danes; he understood the etiquette of nobility. Wulfgar spoke to his liege lord: "Men of the Geats, come from afar over the ocean expanse, have traveled hither. The warriors call their leader Beowulf. They request that they, my prince, may discourse with you. Do not deny them your conversation, gracious Hrothgar. To judge by their war-harness they are worthy of the respect of nobles. Truly the chief is valiant who has led the warriors here."

Hrothgar answered, protector of the Scyldings: "I knew him when he was a youth. His father was Ecgtheow to whom Hrethel the Geat gave his only daughter. His son has now come bravely hither, has visited a loyal friend. Seafarers used to say, they who carried thither gifts for the satisfaction of the Geats, that the valiant warrior has the strength of thirty men in his grip. Holy God in his mercy has sent him to us Western Danes, so I believe, against the terror of Grendel. I shall give treasure to the warrior for his daring. Make haste! Command the band of friends to come in together that I may see them. Tell them also that they are welcome to the Danes."

Then Wulfgar went to the hall-door, and brought

the message: "My valorous lord, leader of the Eastern Danes, commanded me to tell you that he knows of your noble ancestry, and that you, valiant men from over the sea, are welcome here. Now may you go in your battle-ramment, under your helmets, to see Hrothgar. Leave your shields and your wooden battle-shafts here, to await the outcome of the parley."

Arose then the prince, about him many a warrior, a splendid band of thanes; some waited behind to guard the war-gear, as the brave one commanded. Together they advanced under the roof of Heorot—the warrior guided them. The battle hero strode, bold under his helmet, until he stood within.

Beowulf spoke—his coat-of-mail shone, a corselet linked by the cunning of the smith: "Hail, Hrothgar! I am Hygelac's kinsman and thane. I have undertaken many exploits in my youth. I learned of the affair of Grendel in my native land. Seafarers say that this hall, the best of dwellings, stands empty of every warrior and useless, after the light of evening is hidden under the canopy of heaven. Then my people, the best, wise men, advised me, Lord Hrothgar, that I should visit you, because they knew of my might. They themselves had witnessed how I came from battle, blood-stained from the foe, where I bound five, destroyed the brood of monsters; in the waves I slew sea monsters by night, incurred great dangers, avenged the woes of the Weders—the monsters sought trouble—crushing the evil ones. And now against Grendel, against the terrible one, I shall alone carry on the feud. Therefore, O Lord of the Bright Danes, Prince of the Scyldings, I would ask you one favor: that you, protector of warriors, loved lord of the nations, do not deny permission to me, now that I have come thus far, to cleanse Heorot alone, with my following of warriors, this band of bold men.

I have learned too that the monster in his bravado takes no heed of weapons. Therefore—so may Hygelac, my lord, be gracious to me—I scorn to bear sword or broad shield, the yellow shield to battle; but with my bare hands I shall grapple with the enemy and contend for life, foe against foe. Whomever death takes, let him resign himself to the decree of God. I suppose that Grendel will, if he has his way, devour unafraid in the war-hall the Geatish men, the pick of warriors, as he often has devoured (your men). You shall not need to hide my head (with a funeral cloth), because he will have me, drenched in blood, if death takes me. He will carry away the bloody corpse, will plan to devour it; the solitary one will feast without remorse, will stain his retreat on the moor. You will not need to care further about disposing of my body. Send to Hygelac, if the battle should take me, the best of corselets, that protects my breast, the fairest of armor, heirloom of Hrethel, the work of Weland. Wyrd goeth ever as it must!”

Hrothgar spoke, helmet of the Scyldings: “To reward me for past deeds and in kindness you have sought us out, my friend Beowulf. Your father fought the greatest of feuds; he was the slayer of Heatholaf the Wylfing; the Weder folk would not have him for fear of war. Thence he sought the South Danes, the Honor Scyldings, over the rolling waves, when I first ruled the Danes and in my youth held sway over the splendid treasure city of heroes. Heorogar, my older brother, son of Healfdene, was dead then, no longer alive. He was better than I! Afterwards I settled the feud for money. I sent ancient treasures to the Wylfings over the water’s edge; Ecgtheow swore oaths of fidelity to me.

I am grieved in my heart to tell any one what harm, what affliction Grendel has brought on Heorot in his

fiendishness. My hall-troop, my band of warriors has wasted away. Wyrð has carried them off through the terror of Grendel. God may easily restrain the evil destroyer from his deeds! Often they boasted, drunk with beer, warriors over the ale-cup, that in the beer-hall they would await the onslaught of Grendel with the terror of their swords. Then was the mead-hall, the splendid dwelling, in the morning, when day dawned, covered with gore, all the bench-flooring wet with blood, the hall gory. So many less loyal men, loved warriors, possessed I when death had snatched them away. Draw up now to the banquet, make known your mind, your fame, to men, as your heart prompts you."

Then in the beer-hall a bench was cleared for the Geats gathered together; there the bold men went to sit, proud in their strength. A thane served, one who bore in his hand the decorated ale-cup. He poured the clear liquor. At times a minstrel sang, clear-voiced in Heorot. There was joy among the heroes, a band not small of Danes and Weders.

Unferth spoke, son of Ecglaf, he who sat at the feet of the Scyldings' lord, began a quarrel; to him the adventure of Beowulf, the courageous seafarer, was a great vexation, because he would not grant that any other man could ever perform greater deeds on earth, under the heavens, than he himself. "Are you that Beowulf who battled with Breca on the broad sea, competed in swimming, when you two out of daring explored the deep, and in foolhardiness risked your lives in the deep waters? No man, friend or foe, could keep you from that perilous adventure, when you swam on the sea. There you covered the ocean streams with your arms, measured the sea-streets, struck with your hands, glided over the ocean. The ocean waves surged, a winter's storm. You two labored in the powers of the

waters for seven nights; he defeated you in swimming, had the greater strength. In the morning the flood cast him up among the Battle Reamas, whence he sought his own dear land, beloved of his people, the land of the Brondings, a beautiful stronghold, where he ruled the people, the city, and the treasure. The son of Beanstan truly fulfilled his boast against you. Therefore I expect that you will get the worse of this feud, however powerful you have been everywhere in the battle-rush, in the grim battle, if you dare await Grendel close at hand for one night."

Beowulf answered, son of Ecgtheow: "Come now, my friend Unferth, you have said many things, drunk with beer, about Breca, talked about his adventure. I tell you the truth, that I had greater strength in the ocean, greater dangers in the waves, than any other man. We used to say when we were boys, and we used to boast, that we would risk our lives on the ocean, and that we carried out accordingly. We had our naked swords firm in hand as we swam, we expected to guard ourselves against whales. By no means could he swim far from me in the flood, swim more quickly on the sea, and I would not leave him. So we were together in the water for five nights, until the flood drove us apart, the surging waters, the coldest of weather, darkening night, and a north wind blew fiercely against us. The waves were rough. The anger of the sea-fish was stirred up; against these hostile ones my body mail, hard and hand-locked, gave me help; my decorated war-harness, adorned with gold lay on my breast. The hostile fiend drew me to the bottom, the grim one held me fast in his clutch. It was given me however to reach the brute with my sword, with my battle weapon; the battle-rush took away the mighty sea-monster by my hand. So the evil-doers often pressed me sorely. I served them with my precious

sword, as was fitting. They did not have joy of the slaughter, did not eat me, wicked destroyers, sitting at a feast on the ocean-bottom, but on the morrow, wounded with swords, they lay along the shore, silenced by the sword. No more after that on the steep waterway did they hinder seafarers in their journey. Light came from the east, bright beacon of God, the seas subsided so that I could see the headlands, the wind-swept walls. Wyrd often saves an undoomed warrior, if his strength avail! So it was granted me to slay nine monsters with my sword. Never have I heard of a harder fight by night under the arch of heaven, or of a man more sorely pressed on the ocean-stream; but I saved my life from the clutch of the foe, weary of the adventure. The sea, the flowing flood, the surging water, cast me up on the land of the Finns. I never heard of such battlings, such terror of swords, told about you. Breca never yet, neither he nor you, fought so boldly with bright swords—of that I do not boast much—though you were your own brothers' murderer, your near relatives; for that you will suffer punishment in hell, though you be ever so clever. I tell you plainly, son of Ecglaf, that Grendel, the foul monster, would never have committed so much evil against your prince, such disgrace in Heorot, if your courage and your spirit were as bold as you yourself tell. But Grendel has found that he need not fear greatly a battle, the terrible clash of swords, from your people, the Victor Scyldings. He takes toll, respects none of the Danes, enjoys himself, slaughters and kills, and does not expect battle from the Spear Danes. But I shall speedily show him the strength and power of the Geats in battle. After that, whoever will may go boldly to the mead, when over the children of men, the morning light of the next day, the bright-clothed sun shines from the south."

Then the dispenser of treasure, hoary and warlike, was happy; the lord of the Bright Danes was confident of help; the shepherd of the people heard the resolute opinion of Beowulf. [There was laughter of warriors, the din resounded, talk was merry.

Wealththeow moved forward, Hrothgar's queen, mindful of courtesy; gold-adorned she greeted the men in the hall, and then the noble lady presented first the cup to the king of the East Danes, bade him be merry at the beer-drinking, dear to his people. Merrily he enjoyed the feast and the hall-cup, victorious king. Then the lady of the Helmings went about to young and old everywhere, handed the precious cup until the moment came that the ring-adorned queen, wise in judgment, bore the mead-cup to Beowulf. She greeted the lord of the Geats, thanked God in well chosen words that her wish had come to pass, that she might trust in any warrior for relief from trouble. The warrior fierce took the cup from Wealththeow, and then he spoke, prepared for battle; Beowulf, the son of Ecgtheow, answered: "I resolved when I went to the ocean, sat down in the vessel with my band of men, that I certainly would fulfill the will of your people or die in the slaughter, fast in the grip of the fiend. I shall perform great deeds nobly or in this mead-hall await my last day!"

The speech, the boast of the Geat, pleased well the lady. Gold-adorned, the noble queen advanced to sit by her lord.

Then again as before brave words were spoken in the hall, the people happy; there was the sound of a victorious people, until suddenly the son of Healfdene was minded to seek his bed; he knew that the monster planned war against the high hall when they could not see the light of the sun, when night darkened over all,

and the creatures of the shadows came striding, black under the clouds. The company all arose. One greeted another, Hrothgar Beowulf, wished him success, mastery in the wine-hall, and spoke thus: "Never before, since I could lift hand and shield have I entrusted the mighty house of the Danes to any man except you now. Have now and guard the best of houses, remember glory, show the power of a hero, watch against the foe! No wish of yours shall be unfulfilled if you perform that mighty work and live." So Hrothgar, leader of the Scyldings, departed from the hall with his band of warriors; he wished to join Wealtheow, his queen and bed-companion. The Most Glorious of Kings—so men heard say—had set a hall-guard against Grendel; Beowulf held special watch against the monster for the lord of the Danes. Truly the lord of the Geats gladly trusted his courageous might, the mercy of God. Then he took off his iron corselet, his helmet from his head, gave his ornamented sword, best of weapons, to a follower, and bade him guard the war gear. The brave one, Beowulf of the Geats, uttered a boast before he mounted to bed: "In warlike strength, in deeds of battle, I consider myself no less than Grendel does himself. Therefore I will not kill him with the sword, take away his life, although I easily could. He knows nothing of valiant deeds, cannot strike back at me, hack at my shield, though he be notorious in deeds of evil. But we two shall in the night forego the sword, if he dare to seek battle without weapon, and thereafter may the wise God, the holy Lord, award glory as seems fitting to Him. Then the daring warrior lay down, the pillow received the face of the hero, and round him many a bold fighter lay down to rest. None of them thought that from that place he should ever again visit his own dear home, his people, and the castle where he was reared. They

watched how the murderous one would go about his attack. The fiend intended not to tarry but on his first try quickly seized a sleeping warrior, tore him apart without hindrance, crunched his bones, drank the blood from his veins, gulped down huge morsels; in a twinkling he had devoured the lifeless body, feet and hands.

He stepped nearer, seized with his hands the courageous warrior on his bed; the fiend reached forward with his hand. Beowulf grappled quickly, intent on harm, braced himself on his arm. At once the worker of evil found that never on earth, in the quarters of the globe, had he met another man with greater grip. He was terrified, but for all that could not get away. His thought was to get away, he wanted to flee into the darkness, to seek the concourse of devils; never had he met such a reception in the days of his life. Then the kinsman of Hygelac remembered his evening boast, rose up and grappled fast with him. The fingers of the monster cracked, he was trying to run away, the hero grappled tightly. The notorious one wished, if he could, to tear himself loose, and flee thence to his fen-retreat; knew that the power of his fingers was in the grip of the foe. That was a sad journey that the evil doer made to Heorot!

The splendid hall resounded; terror came upon all the Danes, the dwellers in the castle, on each one of the bold ones, the warriors. Raging and furious were both guardians of the hall. The building resounded. It was a marvel that the wine-hall withstood the battlers, that it did not fall to the ground, beautiful building. But it was made fast within and without with iron bands, smithied with skill. Then, so I have heard, many a bench adorned with gold started from the floor where the strong ones fought. Wise men of the Scyldings had never imagined that any man might in any

had heard that before now murderous death had carried off too many of the Danish people in this wine-hall. But the Lord granted to the Weder folk speed in war, solace and help, that they through the strength of one, by his might alone, should all be victorious over their enemy. Truly it is made evident that mighty God has governed mankind forever.

The walker in darkness came striding in the black night. The warriors slept, they who should have guarded the gabled hall—all but one. It was known to men that the evil doer could not dash them into darkness—the Lord did not wish it—but Beowulf, in anger at the foe, watchfully and enraged, awaited the issue of the battle.

Then from the moors, under cover of darkness, came Grendel; God's anger went with him. The evil ravager expected to ensnare some one in the high hall. He advanced under the clouds until he clearly saw the wine-hall, the gold hall of men, bright with ornaments; nor was that the first time that he had visited the home of Hrothgar. Never in his life, before or after, met he a bolder warrior, and hall thanes.

Came then traveling to the hall the creature be of joy. The door, bound fast with wrought iron, once burst open when he touched it with his hands. Viciously, swollen with anger, he crashed against the entrance of the hall. Quickly after that the fiend trod the paved floor, strode boiling with rage; a ghastly light, most like fire, shot from his eyes. In the hall he saw many warriors, a band of kinsmen, sleeping together, a troop of young fighters. He chortled; the evil monster thought that he would deprive each body of its life before day dawned, since he had hope of a feast of slaughter. But it was not fated that he should feast on man after that night. Eagerly the kinsman of Hygelac

way wreck it, splendid and adorned with antlers, destroy it by cunning, unless fire embraced it in its flamy grasp. The noise sounded forth again. Dreadful terror came upon the North Danes, even upon those who from the wall heard the cry, the terrible sound sounding from the adversary of God, the song of defeat, the captive of hell bewailing his wound. He who was the strongest of mortal men held him fast.

The protector of warriors would by no means let the murderous visitor escape alive; he did not consider Grendel's life useful to any man. There often a warrior of Beowulf unsheathed his heirloom, would defend the life of his lord, the famous leader, if that were possible. They did not know when they engaged in the struggle, bold-hearted warriors, and thought to hack him on every side, aiming to kill, that not even the best blade on earth, no sword could touch the malefactor; he had put a spell on war weapons, on every sword.

His death was destined to be woeful, and the alien spirit must travel far into the kingdom of fiends. Then he discovered, he who formerly and in blithe mood had committed many evils on mankind—he was outlawed by God—that his body would not avail him, but the brave kinsman of Hygelac had seized him by the hand. Each, however was loathsome to the other. The foul fiend got a mortal wound; on his shoulder the great crack was evident, the sinews broke apart, his joints burst. Victory was granted to Beowulf; Grendel had to flee, sick to death, to the marshy slopes, seek a joyless dwelling. Well he knew that the end of his life was reached, the number of his days.

The wish of all the Danes was fulfilled in the result of the bloody conflict. He who had come from afar, wise and bold, had purged the hall of Hrothgar, saved it from affliction. He rejoiced in his night work, in

his noble deed. The man of the Geats had made good his boast to the East Danes; he had relieved all their sorrow and care which they in sad necessity formerly had to suffer, a great affliction. That was evidence clear after the battle-bold one had affixed the hand, arm and shoulder—all indeed of Grendel's grip—under the wide roof.

In the morning—the story runs—many a warrior was about the gift-hall; the folk-leaders traveled from far and near, over distant ways, to see the marvel, the tracks of the loathly. His death did not seem sad to any of the warriors who saw the foot-prints of the vanquished, saw how he, weary in spirit, overcome in conflict, doomed and fugitive, betook himself thence to the pool of the nickers. There the water was surging with blood, the horrible swirl of the waves turbid with hot blood, with battle-gore; the death-doomed had plunged. Afterwards he joylessly laid down his life in the fen retreat, his heathen soul; there hell received him.

The old warriors and many a young one returned from the happy trip, blithe from the pool, riding on horseback, heroes on their horses. Beowulf's glory was talked of; many a one said that north or south between the seas of the wide world, under the expanse of the heavens, no other shield bearer was worthier of power. They did not disparage however their lord, kindly Hrothgar—because he was a good king. At times the battle-bold let their bays gallop, let them race where the roads seemed good or were favorably known to them. At times athane of the king, a boastful warrior, mindful of songs, he who remembered a multitude of ancient stories—word found word, bound together by truth—began to recite with skill the journey of Beowulf, to tell quickly the story in order, to fit words together.

(Omitted ll. 874-915: The minstrel narrates the story of the adventure of Sigemund, the son of Waels, who had slain monsters with the help of his nephew Fitela.)

At times they measured the yellow roads, racing their horses. Thus the morning light was urged on and hastened. Many a warrior, bold-hearted, went to the high hall to view the marvel; likewise the king himself, guardian of the treasure, in glory and honor advanced from his lodging with a great following, and his queen with him trod the path to the mead-hall with a company of ladies.

Hrothgar spoke—he went to the hall, stood at the door-post, saw the high roof glittering with gold, and Grendel's hand—: "For this sight let us speedily thank the Almighty! Much affliction I bore, grief at Grendel's hands. God can forever work wonder after wonder, the Shepherd of Glory. But a short while ago I thought I should never find help for my troubles, when drenched in blood the fairest of houses stood gory, an over-powering woe for each of my wise men, they who never hoped to defend the land-mark of the people from the loathly ones, demons and evil spirits. Now a warrior through the might of God has accomplished the deed which we all before with our wisdom could not achieve. Truly she may say, whatever woman bore that child after the manner of mankind, if she still lives, that the Ancient Lord was kindly to her in her child-bearing. Now I shall cherish you, Beowulf, best of warriors, as my son; preserve from now on the new relation. You shall have no lack of worldly desires over which I have power. Many a time for smaller service have I given reward, honor from the hoard, to a less valiant warrior, weaker in battle. Such deeds have you done that your fame will live forever. May the Almighty reward you with honor, as He has now done!"

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke: "We performed that mighty work, battling with a great heart, boldly dared the unknown terror. Much do I wish that you yourself had seen him, the fiend with his trappings, killed. I thought quickly to force him to a bed of slaughter with a tight grip, that, by my embrace, he should lie struggling for life, unless his body escaped. I could not—God did not wish it—hinder his going; I did not hold him tightly enough, the deadly foe; the fiend was too mighty in his going. He left however his hand, his arm and shoulder, to save his life and mark his track. But the wretched being has not bought any consolation thereby; he will not live the longer, the hateful spoiler, afflicted with sins. The wound has tightly bound him in baleful bands; the creature stained with crime shall in that shape await the great judgment, to see how the glorious Lord will adjudge him."

Then the son of Ecglaef (Unferth) ceased from boasting of his deeds in battle, since by the might of the hero the nobles saw the hand, the fingers of the fiend, above the high roof; in plain view of all was each of the hard nails, most like steel, the claw of the heathenish warrior monstrous and horrible. Each one said that nothing was hard enough to touch him, no celebrated sword that would cut off the monster's bloody battle fist.

Then orders were promptly given that the interior of Heorot should be decorated; many there were, men and women, who adorned that wine-hall, seat of hospitality. Tapestries ornamented with gold glittered on the walls, many wondrous sights for any warrior who gazed on them. The bright building, fast bound with iron, was badly wrecked, the hinges wrenched away. The roof alone escaped quite undamaged, when the monster covered with sins turned in flight, despairing

of life. It is not easy to avoid death—try it who will—but the soul-bearers, the sons of men, dwellers on earth, must of necessity seek the prepared place where the body fast in the grave shall sleep after the feast.

Time came for the son of Healfdene to go to the hall; the king himself would share the feast. Never that I heard of did the nation in greater force bravely gather about their treasure-giver. The glorious ones sat down on the benches, rejoicing in the feast, and courteously drank many a mead-cup. Hrothgar and Hrothulf, mighty kinsmen, were in the high hall. Heorot was filled with friends; the Scyldings had attempted no treachery at that time.

Then the son of Healfdene gave Beowulf a golden standard, reward of victory, an adorned banner with staff, helmet and corselet. Many saw the famous treasure-sword brought before the hero. Beowulf enjoyed the cup in the hall; he needed not to be ashamed of the gifts before the archers. I have never heard of many men giving four treasures, adorned with gold, to others at the ale-bench in more friendly manner. About the helmet's crown the rim bound with wire protected the head in order that no sword, tempered hard for battle, might grievously harm it, when the warrior had to go against the foe. The protector of heroes commanded that eight horses, head-gear adorned with gold, be led onto the floor, inside the enclosure; on one of them rested a saddle adorned with war-gear, ornamented with treasure, battle-seat of the noble king when the son of Healfdene was minded to indulge in sword play; in the front of battle valor never failed the famous king, while the slain were falling. And then the prince of the Ingwines gave Beowulf possession of both, of horses and arms, bade him enjoy them well. So nobly did the famous prince, treasure guardian of heroes, reward

dangers in battle with horses and treasures that never will man find fault if he speaks the truth as he should.

Moreover to each of those who had undertaken the voyage with Beowulf the prince of warriors presented treasure, an heirloom, at the mead-bench; and he commanded that gold be given as recompense for that one whom Grendel had foully slaughtered, as he would have slaughtered more of them, if the wise God—and the courage of a man—had not withstood fate. The Lord ruled then, as he now does, all mankind. Therefore understanding and forethought are always best. Much shall he experience of good and ill who for a long time in these days of strife enjoys the world.

There was singing and music in the presence of the battle leaders of Healfdene; the harp was struck, the song often told, when Hrothgar's minstrel afforded entertainment along the mead-benches—about the sons of Finn and how disaster came upon them.

(Omitted ll. 1068-1159).

The song was sung, the lay of the gleeman. Revelry broke loose again, festive noises resounded, the cup-bearers poured wine from rare vessels. Then came Wealhtheow forth, advanced wearing her golden crown to the spot where the two valiant ones, nephew and uncle, sat together. As yet the relationship was undisturbed, each was true to the other. Unferth, the spokesman, likewise sat there at the feet of the lord of the Scyldings; every one of them trusted his spirit, thought that he had great courage, although he had not been merciful to his kinsmen at the sword-play. The lady of the Scyldings spoke: "Receive this cup, my lord, dispenser of treasure. Be merry, generous prince of men, and speak to the Geats with kind words, as a man should. Be gracious with the Geats, remember the gifts which you now have from near and far. I have

been told that you would have the warrior for a son. Heorot is purged, the bright ring-hall. Make use while you may of many rewards, and to your children leave folk and kingdom when you must go forth to view death. I know my gracious Hrothulf, that he will rule the young men honorably if you, friend of the Scyldings, should leave the world before him. I think that he will repay our children with kindness, if he fully remembers all the honors which we, according to his desire and to his honor, paid him while he was a boy." She turned then to the bench where her sons were, Hrethric and Hrothmund, and the sons of heroes, the young men in a company; there the valiant man sat, Beowulf of the Geats, by the two brothers.

The cup was borne to him, friendly words said to him, twisted gold graciously given—two armlets, a corselet and rings, the finest of collars that I have heard of in the world. Never have I heard of a more beautiful one under the heavens among the treasures of warriors, since Hama carried away to the bright town the necklace of the Brisings, a precious treasure and jewel-box; he fled from the crafty enmity of Eormannic, chose eternal gain. That ring Hygelac of the Geats, nephew of Swerting, had on his last adventure, when he defended the treasure under his banner, guarded the spoil; fate carried him off when in his pride he challenged trouble, a feud with the Frisians. He carried that treasure, the precious stones, over the sea-bowl, a mighty ruler. Shield in hand he died. Came then the corpse of the king into the power of the Franks, his armor and his collar. Less valiant warriors robbed the slain after the slaughter; the Geats dwelt in the place of the dead.

The hall was filled with music. Wealhtheow spoke, addressed the company: "Enjoy this collar, dear Beowulf, young man, with good fortune, and make use of this

corselet—a great treasure—and prosper. Make yourself known through valor, and be kind in counsel to these boys. I shall reward you for it. You have brought to pass that men far and near will forever honor you, even as widely as the sea surrounds the wind-swept walls. May you be, prince, while you live, blessed! I wish you much treasure. Act fittingly toward my son, happy one. Here each warrior is true to the other, well disposed, friendly to his lord; the thanes are united, the people ready, the warriors well drunken. Do as I bid!”

She went to her seat. The banquet was excellent; the men drank wine. They did not think of Wyrd, of cruel fate, how it had struck down many a warrior.

When evening had come and Hrothgar had gone to his dwelling, the ruler to his rest, numberless princes guarded the hall, as they often used to. They cleared away the bench-planks; round about the hall beds and pillows were strewn. One of the beer-drinkers about to die, lay down to rest, a doomed man. They placed their bucklers at their heads, bright shields. There on the bench above each warrior was easily seen the tall helmet, the ringed corselet, the mighty shaft. Their custom was to be always ready for war, whether at home or with the army, on whatever occasion their lord had need of them. That was a good nation.

Thus they sank to sleep. A certain one paid dearly for his sleep in a way that had often happened to them, since Grendel had inhabited the gold-hall, had committed violence, until his end came, death after his sins. It became clear, widely known to men, that an avenger still lived after the hated one, a long time after the grievous strife. Grendel's mother, a hideous monster woman, remembered her troubles, she who had to dwell in the dreadful water, cold streams, since Cain became

the murderer of his own brother; his father's son. He then went forth an exile, marked for murder, fleeing from human joys, inhabited waste places. From him arose a great number of fated spirits; Grendel was one of them, a hateful, accursed outcast; in Heorot he found a watchful man waiting for battle. There the monster grappled with him; Beowulf however remembered his mighty strength, the precious gift which God had granted him, and he trusted in the Ruler for grace, help and aid. Therefore he overcame the fiend, vanquished the hell spirit. So Grendel departed, humiliated, deprived of joy, to seek out his death place, the foe of mankind. And yet his mother, ravenous and gloomy, was undertaking a sorrowful adventure to avenge the death of her son.

She came then to Heorot, where the Ring Danes were sleeping about the hall. Then was it a sudden reverse for the warriors when Grendel's mother burst in upon them. The evil was less in proportion as the strength of a woman, the war power of a woman, to armed men, when the bound swords strengthened by the hammer, the sword stained with blood, shears with good edge the opposing boar on the helmet. Then in the hall the hard-edged sword was drawn throughout the benches, many a wide shield raised firmly in hand. No one thought of helmet or of wide corselet when the terror fell upon him. She was in haste, wanted to leave there to save her life, since she was discovered. Quickly she seized fast one of the warriors, and then she went to the fen. The victim was Hrothgar's dearest companion of warriors between the two seas, a mighty shield fighter whom she destroyed in his bed, a famous hero. Beowulf was not there; another place had been assigned to the famous Geat after the gift giving. An outcry was heard in Heorot; she snatched the widely known

bloody hand. Trouble was renewed, broke out in the hall. That was not a good exchange which they on both sides had to buy with the lives of friends!

The old king, the hoary warrior, was troubled in mind when he learned that his chief thane was no longer living, his dearest follower dead. Beowulf, the victorious warrior, was quickly fetched to the lodge. At break of day the noble champion went with his followers, accompanied his companions to the place where the wise one was waiting to learn whether the Almighty would ever grant him a change after his season of woe. The man famous in battle crossed the floor with his troop—the hall beams resounded—addressed the wise lord of the Ingwines, asked if as he had desired, the night had been agreeable.

Hrothgar spoke, protector of the Scyldings: "Ask not about happiness! Sorrow is renewed for the Danish people. Dead is Aeschere, Yrmenlaf's older brother, my confidant and counselor, my comrade, when we in battle defended our heads as the footmen clashed, smote the boars' heads. As Aeschere was so should a warrior be, an excellent follower. The wandering murderous spirit has been his slayer in Heorot. I know not whither the monster exulting in the carcass took her return journey, rejoicing in her feast. She avenged the feud: last night you slew Grendel in violent manner with tight grapplings because he had for too long wasted and injured my people. He fell in the battle, deprived of his life, and now another mighty destroyer comes, would revenge her son. And she has further continued the feud, as it may seem to many a thane who with his treasure-giver mourns in spirit, in bitter grief. Now the hand of him who carried out all your desires lies still.

I have heard land-dwellers, my people, hall-coun-

cillors, say that they saw two such monsters, wanderers in the wilderness, holding the moors, unearthly spirits. One of them, as far as they could make out, was like a woman; the other wretched one trod the tracks of an exile in the form of a man, only he was bigger than any other man. Men used to call him Grendel; they do not know about a father, whether any mysterious spirits were born before them. They inhabit a hidden land, wolf-crag, windy headland, terrifying fen-paths, where the mountain stream vanishes beneath the blackness of bluffs, the flood under the earth. Not many miles from here the pool stands; over it hang frost-covered woods; trees, the roots tightly bound, overshadow the water. There every night a terrible portent may be seen—fire on the water. None of the children of men lives who is wise enough to know its depth. Though the heath-stalker, the mighty-horned hart, worn out by dogs and driven from afar, seeks the woods, he would rather yield his life, his spirit on the bank, than plunge to hide his head. That is not a comfortable place! Thence the tossing waves rise up black to the clouds, when the wind stirs up bad weather, until the air becomes murky, the heavens weep. Now to you alone we again look for advice. The home as yet you do not know, the terrifying place, where you may find the guilty creature. Seek, if you dare! With treasure I shall reward you for that feud, as I formerly did, with twisted gold, if you escape.”

Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow: “Be not troubled, wise man. It is better for everyone to avenge his friend than to mourn bitterly. Each one of us must expect the end of worldly life. Let him who may gain glory before his death; that for the mighty warrior after death is the best remembrance. Arise, warden of the realm! Let us quickly depart to examine the track of

Grendel's kin. I promise you this: he shall not escape to cover, neither in the depths of the earth nor in the mountain wood, and not in the bottom of the ocean, go where he will. Have patience this day in all your troubles, as I expect of you."

Up jumped the ancient warrior, thanked God, the mighty Lord, for Beowulf's words.

Then Hrothgar's horse was bridled, the steed with braided mane. The wise king rode forth majestically; the footmen marched, the shield-bearers. Tracks were easily seen along the forest paths, her passage over the bottoms. Straightforward she went over the black moors; she carried off, dead, the best of warriors of those who ruled the home of Hrothgar. The son of princes passed over the steep stone cliffs, narrow paths, straitened lonely paths, an unknown passage, precipitous bluffs, many dens of water-monsters. He with a few wise companions pressed forward to view the land, until he suddenly saw the mountain wood leaning over the hoary rock, a joyless wood. Beneath was the water, bloody and stirred up. All the Danes, the Scyldings' friends, were sorely distressed, each warrior was grieved, when they found the head of Aeschere on that sea-cliff. The water boiled with blood, with hot gore—the men looked at it. The horn from time to time sounded a stirring blast. The foot band sat down. They saw in the water many of the tribe of serpents, strange sea-snakes exploring the sea, and monsters lying on the headland, those who in the early morning often make sad passage on the sail-road, serpents and wild beasts. They rushed away, furious and enraged. They had heard the sound, the war-horn singing. One of them a man of the Geats deprived of life with an arrow, hindered from his wave-battling, since the hard war-arrow pierced his vitals. He was the slower in swimming

in the pool when death snatched him away. Quickly in the waves he was hard pressed with barbed boar spears, violently attacked, and drawn to the bluff, the marvelous water-roamer. The men viewed the grisly demon.

Beowulf dressed himself in his war-gear, not anxious about his life; now the war-corselet, hand knit, wide and adorned, should attempt the swimming, the corselet which could protect his body, so that the grip of battle might not harm his breast, the savage grasp of the raging one harm his life. Further, the bright helmet guarded his head, the helmet that was to stir up the depths of the lake, visit the mingling of the waters, adorned with treasure, surrounded with beautiful chains as the forger of weapons in distant days wrought it, marvellously made it, encircled it with figures of the boar, so that neither sword nor war-blade might ever bite into it. That was not the least of aids to his valor which the counselor of Hrothgar lent him in his need. The name of the hilted sword was Hrunting, outstanding among heirlooms; the sword was iron, etched with acid, hardened with battle-blood. Never in battle had it failed any man who brandished it, who dared go on dreadful adventures, visit the battle place of foes; that was not the first time that it had to perform great work. Clearly the son of Ecglaf, mighty in strength, did not remember what he had formerly said when drunk with wine, since he lent the weapons to a better swordsman; he dared not adventure his life in the surging of the waves, perform valorous deeds. Thus he came short of glory, of great deeds. It was not so with Beowulf when he had dressed himself for battle.

Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow: "Remember now, O famous son of Healfdene, wise prince, generous friend of men, now that I am ready for the adventure, what we formerly said: If I for your trouble had to part from

life, that you for me would take the place of a father forever. Be the guardian of my thanes, my companions, if the battle takes me. Send to Hygelac, dear Hrothgar, the treasures which you gave me. Then may the lord of the Geats learn by that gold, Hrethel's son may see when he looks on that treasure, that I had found a generous dispenser of rings, enjoyed them while I could. And let Unferth have the old treasure, the wondrously ornamented sword, let the widely famed man have the tempered blade. I will gain glory with Hrunting, or death shall take me."

After these words the man of the Weder Geats rushed bravely away, would not wait for an answer. The surging flood received the warrior. Most of the day passed before he reached the bottom. Soon the ravenous creature, fierce and greedy, who had inhabited the waters for a hundred seasons, saw that some man was exploring from above the dwelling of monsters. She reached out toward him, seized the warrior with horrible talons, but could not harm his strong body; the corselet enclosed him so that she could not reach through the coat of mail, the linked corselet, with her loathly fingers. Then the sea-wolf, when she came to the bottom, bore the armored prince to her dwelling; he could in no way wield his weapons—he was courageous enough—so many monsters beset him in his swimming; many a sea-beast with battle tusks beat against his armor, the demons pursued him. Then the prince saw that he was in some battle-hall, where the water harmed him not and the power of the flood could not touch him because of the roofed hall. He saw a fire-beam; a brilliant light shining brightly.

Then the brave one knew that it was the accursed ocean monster, the mighty sea woman. He launched a violent attack with his battle sword, his hand did not

hinder the stroke, so that on her head the ringed sword sang a greedy war-song. But the visitor found that the battle bright sword would not bite, would not harm life; the sword failed the chief when needed. It had in times past endured many encounters, split many a helmet, battle-armor of the doomed. That was the first time that the reputation of the precious treasure fell down.

Once more he was resolute, not lagging in courage, the kinsman of Hygelac mindful of great deeds. Away the angry warrior hurled the ringed weapon, ornamented, so that it lay on the earth, strong and steel-edged. He trusted to his strength, the power of his grip. So shall a man do when he expects to gain enduring praise in battle; he will not care about his life. Then, regretting not the feud, the warrior of the Geats seized Grendel's mother by the shoulder. Enraged as he was, the man bold in battle swung his deadly foe so that she sank to the ground. She quickly paid him back with hard grapplings and seized him tightly. Wearied, she overthrew the strongest of fighters, the renowned battler, so that he fell. She sat upon the visitor to her hall, and drew her knife, broad and brown-edged; she wished to revenge her son, her only offspring. About his shoulder lay the woven corselet that guarded his life, withstood the entry of sword and edge. Then had the son of Ecgtheow, the champion of the Geats, perished in the vast abyss, had not his battle-corselet, the hard war-net, given aid—and holy God ruled over the victory; the wise Lord, the Ruler of Heaven, awarded it aright, and easily, after Beowulf again stood up.

Then saw he among the weapons a victory-blest blade, an ancient, giant's sword, a mighty sword, glory of warriors; that was the choicest of weapons, except that it was bigger than any other man could bear to battle, good and splendid, work of giants. Then the valiant

Scylding seized the ringed hilt; enraged and fierce he brandished the ornamented sword, despairing of his life, and smote in anger. The hard weapon gripped her on the neck, cut through the bone-rings; the sword pierced through the doomed body. She sank to the ground. The sword was bloody, the warrior rejoiced in his work.

Light gleamed, light shone within, even as the candle of heaven shines brightly from the skies. He gazed about the dwelling; moved along by the wall. The thane of Hygelac, angry and resolute, brandished the sword by the hilt; that blade was not useless to the warrior, because Beowulf wanted to pay back to Grendel the many battle-assaults which he had perpetrated on the West Danes many more times than one, when he slew Hrothgar's companions in their sleep, devoured fifteen sleeping men of the Danish tribe and carried off an equal number, loathly booty. The furious warrior repaid him for that, inasmuch as he saw Grendel, weary of war, lying at rest: thus the battle at Heorot had harmed him. The corpse burst apart when after death it suffered the blow, the vicious cut of the sword, and Beowulf cut off the head.

At once the wise followers who with Hrothgar were watching the water, saw that the rush of waters was turbid, the sea colored with blood. The men with grizzled locks, the old men, spoke together about the valiant one, how they did not expect the hero to return, to visit, exulting in victory, the famous prince. Many of them thought that the sea-wolf had rent him in pieces. Mid-afternoon came. The valiant Scyldings abandoned the headland; the generous friend of men took his way homeward. The guests sat in sorrow and gazed at the pool. They wished but did not expect to see their lord himself. Then the sword, the war weapon, began to

waste away because of the clots of battle gore. That was a marvel: it melted just like ice when the Father loosens the fetters of frost, unwinds the wrapping of the waters, He who rules seasons and times. That is the true Lord.

The man of the Weder Geats took nothing precious from that dwelling—although he saw many treasures there—except the head, and the hilt set with jewels; the sword had already melted, the ornamented weapon had burned up. So hot was the blood, the monster so venomous who had perished down there.

Soon he was swimming, he who had awaited at the battle the attack of the foe; he dived up through the water. The waters were cleansed, the roomy haunts, because the monster had left this life and this transitory world.

The protector of seafarers came to land, bravely swimming. He rejoiced in his sea-booty, in the mighty burden which he carried with him. They went to meet him, they thanked God, the bold band of warriors; they rejoiced over their leader, because they were able to see him sound. Helmet and corselet were quickly loosened from the valiant one. The pool subsided, the water beneath the clouds colored with battle-gore. Thence they retraced their tracks, glad at heart, strode over paths, familiar streets. Men of royal courage bore the head from the cliff, a toilsome feat for each one of the brave ones; four were needed, and they with trouble, to carry on a spear-shaft the head of Grendel to the gold-hall; straightway the brave warriors, fourteen of the Geats, arrived at the hall. The leader, valiant in their midst, trod the grounds of the mead-hall. The captain of the thanes entered, a man of bold deeds, exalted with glory, a valiant warrior, to greet Hrothgar. Grendel's head was carried by the hair on to the floor

where the men were drinking, a surprise for the nobles and the lady, too; men saw a hideous spectacle.

Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow: "Hail! To you, son of Healfdene, man of the Scyldings, we have joyfully brought as a token of glory, the sea-booty which you see here. In no gentle way did I risk my life in battle under water, with great hardship adventured on the labor; almost vain was the struggle, except that God shielded me. I could do nothing in the battle with Hrunting, although that is a good weapon; but the Ruler of Men granted that I should see hanging on the wall a beautiful, huge and ancient sword—very often He has pointed the way to the friendless—and I drew the weapon. Then I slew in battle the guardians of the house when chance favored me. The battle sword, the damascened weapon, burned away as the blood spurted forth, hottest of battle-gore. I carried away that sword from the enemy, avenged the crimes, the slaughter of the Danes, as was fitting. I promise you therefore that you may sleep free of care in Heorot with your band of warriors, and so may eachthane among your people, of the old men and the young, because you need not on their account fear danger, O prince of the Scyldings, mortal danger to warriors, as you formerly did."

Then was the golden sword handed to the veteran warrior, to the hoary battle-leader, an antique work of giants; after the death of the demons it came into the possession of the lord of the Danes, a work of magic smiths; and thus when this bitter-hearted creature, God's enemy, guilty of murder, and his mother too, left this world, it came into the control of the best of kings between the seas, of all those who in southern Scandinavia dispensed treasure.

Hrothgar spoke—he inspected the sword, an ancient

relic; on it was written the beginning of the old struggle when the flood, the surging ocean, slew the brood of the giants; they fared badly. That nation was estranged from the Eternal Lord; them the Ruler finally punished through the rising of the waters. Further, on the guard of bright gold was correctly told in runes, set down and said, for whom that choicest of swords with its ornamented hilt and dragon figure was first made. Then the wise son of Healfdene spoke—all were silent: "That, indeed, may a man say who advances truth and right among men—the ancient king who remembers all from long ago—that this warrior was born superior. Your fame is spread through distant countries, my friend Beowulf, your fame over every nation. Your prowess, however, you carry modestly, and wisely. I shall stand by my offer of friendship as we two discussed it. You will be a lasting comfort to your people, a help to heroes. Heremod did not become such to the offspring of Ecgwela, to the Honor Scyldings; he grew great not for their desires, but for the slaughter and destruction of the Danish people. In his rage he slew his companions, his comrades, until he, the famous king, wandered away alone from the society of men. Although mighty God had exalted him with the joys of strength, with might above all men and favored him, a blood-thirsty spirit grew in his heart; no rings would he give the Danes, as they deserved. He remained joyless, endured the penalty of that struggle, the long-continued hostility of his people. Take heed by that, understand manly virtue. It is for you that I, wise in years, have told this. Marvellous it is to relate how mighty God with generous heart deals out wisdom to mankind, position and rank; He has control of all things. Sometimes He lets the thoughts of a man of noble descent turn on pleasures, allows him worldly joys on his estate, to

rule the stronghold of men, gives power to him over quarters of the world, a kingdom wide, so that in his folly he is unable to imagine the end of it. He dwells in plenty. Nothing hinders him, neither sickness nor old age, and care does not darken his soul. Contentions nowhere cause bitterness for him, but all the world moves according to his will. He knows no worse condition, until a measure of arrogance grows and envelops him. Then the guard sleeps, the shepherd of the soul. That sleep is too deep, bound with cares; the murderer is very near who shoots his arrow with evil intent. Then is he, helmeted, pierced in the heart with a sharp arrow—he cannot shield himself—with the perverse, strange counsels of the evil spirit. What he has enjoyed for so long seems too little for him; viciously he covets, does not proudly give ornamented rings, forgets his future state, and disdains the measure of honors which God, the Ruler of Glory, formerly gave him. At the end it happens that the perishable body shrinks away, falls as doomed. Another seizes his place, one who ungrudgingly dispenses treasure, the ancient wealth of the prince, and reckes not of terrors. Guard against such wickedness, dear Beowulf, best of warriors, and choose the better course, eternal counsels. Incline not to arrogance, glorious warrior. Now shall the bloom of your strength last for a while. Soon after it will happen that sickness or sword shall put an end to your might, or grip of fire or surging of flood, or attack with knife or flight of arrow or hateful old age; or brightness of eyes will diminish and grow dim: suddenly then death will overtake you, leader of men.

Thus I for fifty years have ruled the Ring Danes and have guarded them in war, with spears and swords, against many a nation over this earth, so that I considered that I had no foe under the expanse of heaven.

But lo, a change came even in my ancestral seat, sadness following joy, after Grendel, ancient foe, became my visitor. Because of this persecution I constantly endured great suffering of mind. Thanks be to God, to the eternal Lord, that I have lived to see that gory head, my old tribulation passed. Take now your place, share the joy of the banquet, honored in battle. We shall share many treasures when the morrow comes."

The Geat was happy, and went at once to seek his place as the wise king had commanded him. Then, as before, a splendid banquet was newly prepared for the brave hall-dwellers. The cover of night darkened blackly over the band of men. The warriors arose; the gray-haired, ancient Scylding was minded to go to bed. The Geat, the famous warrior, longed to sleep. Promptly the weary man, the warrior from a far country, was shown the way by the chamberlain, he who in courtesy supplied all the needs of the noble, such things as in that day seafarers were accustomed to have. The great-hearted warrior rested; the building towered high, broad and adorned with gold. The guest slept within, until the black raven with blithe heart heralded heaven's radiance. Then came bright light hastening over the shadows; the warriors hurried, the nobles were ready to return to their people; the bold-spirited visitor wished to take ship for a distant voyage.

Then the brave son of Ecglaf ordered that Hrunting be carried in, told Beowulf to take his sword, his precious weapon; Beowulf gave thanks for the loan, said that he counted that war-friend a good one, useful in war, did not condemn at all the edge of the sword. That was a brave warrior. And then the warriors, eager to depart, were ready in their armor; the hero, honored by the Danes, went to the high seat where the other was. The brave fighter greeted Hrothgar.

Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow: "Now we seafarers, come from afar, wish to say that we are eager to visit Hygelac. We have been well entertained here according to our wishes; you have dealt well by us. If therefore I may gain on earth more of your affection, O leader of men, than I have as yet, I shall be prepared at once for warlike deeds. If I hear over the expanse of the waters that your neighbors threaten you with harm, as enemies formerly did, I will bring a thousand thanes, warriors to aid you. I can speak for Hygelac, ruler of the Geats; young though he be, shepherd of his people, he will help me by word and deed, so that I may be an honor to you and bring spears for your support, a powerful aid, when you have need of men. If, also, Hrethric, royal child, determines to come to the court of the Geats, he shall find many friends there; foreign countries are better visited by him who is himself of worth."

Hrothgar answered him: "The wise Ruler has put these words into your mind. Never heard I a man so young discourse so wisely. You are strong in strength, old in judgment, wise in speech. I do expect if it should happen that the spear, fierce battle, should take away Hrethel's offspring, if sickness or sword rob you of your lord, the shepherd of his people, and you are still alive, the Sea Geats will not have a better one to choose as king, guardian of warriors and treasure, if you are willing to rule the realm of your kinsmen. As time goes on, dear Beowulf, your spirit pleases me more and more. You have brought about mutual friendship for the nations—for the Geats and the Spear Danes; fighting shall cease, and the hostilities which they formerly suffered. There shall be a community of treasure while I rule the wide kingdom; many a man shall greet another with gifts over the gannet's bath.

Over the ocean the ring-prowed ship shall bring offerings and tokens of love. I know that the people are unchanging, both to friend and to foe, blameless in every way, according to old custom."

Then did the protector of warriors, the son of Healfdene, give him twelve treasures; bade him visit and in safety his own people with the presents, and come back soon. The noble king, lord of the Scyldings, kissed the best of thanes and embraced him about the neck; tears fell from him, the gray-haired man. Two thoughts for the future the wise old man had, but one stronger than the other—that they would never meet again, valiant men in council. So dear to him was the man that he could not restrain the welling of his breast, but in his breast, fast bound with his heart-strings, a secret longing after the man burned in his blood. Then Beowulf, the warrior bedecked with gold, exulting in his treasure, trod the greensward; the vessel, riding at anchor, awaited its lord. Hrothgar's generosity was often praised as they advanced; he was a king entirely blameless until old age deprived him of the delights of power, he who had often injured many.

So the band of brave young men came to the water; they wore coats-of-mail, linked corselets. The sentinel observed the arrival of the warriors, as he had formerly done; not with insult did he greet from the top of the hill the visitors, but he rode toward them, and said to the Weder folk that they, bright-armored warriors, went with good-will to the ship. Then on the beach the spacious vessel was laden with armor, the ring-prowed boat with horses and treasures; the mast towered high over the treasures given by Hrothgar. He gave to the boat-keeper a gold-bound sword, so that he was afterwards on the mead-bench more honored for the treasure, for that heirloom. Beowulf went to the vessel to plough

the deep water, left the land of the Danes. On the mast was a certain sea-garment, a sail made fast with a rope; the vessel groaned. The wind did not turn the wave-floater from her course over the waves; the sea-goer advanced, the foamy-necked sped over the wave, the ornamented prow over the ocean streams, until they could see the cliffs of the Geats, the well-known promontories. The vessel pressed forward, urged by the wind, rested on land. Quickly was the harbor guardian ready at the water, he who already for a long time, eager at the water's edge, had looked out into the distance for the dear men. With anchor-ropes he bound fast the broad-bosomed ship to the shore in case the might of the waves might tear the fair vessel from them.

Then he ordered the warrior's treasure to be carried up, jewels and gold plate; it was not far thence that he had to seek out the giver of treasure, Hygelac, son of Hrethel, who dwelt there at home with his comrades, close by the sea-wall.

(Omitted ll. 1925-2177: the poet digresses to tell the story of Thryth, wife of Offa. Beowulf rehearses to Hygelac what happened at Heorot—the slaying of Grendel and of Grendel's mother, and the giving of presents. He digresses also to an account of Hrothgar's daughter Freawara. Beowulf gives his treasures to Hygelac.)

Thus the son of Ecgtheow, the man famous in battle, proved himself valiant in brave deeds, and acted wisely. He never slew his companions at the drinking; his heart was not brutal, but he, the brave warrior, guarded with the greatest human skill the ample gifts which God had given him. He was despised for a long time because the sons of the Geats did not consider him brave nor would the lord of the Weders grant him much honor at

the mead-bench. They were quite sure that he was slothful, an inactive prince. A reversal for every trouble came to the famous man.

Then the protector of warriors, the king of battle glory, ordered that the heirloom of Hrêthel, adorned with gold, be brought in; at that time there was not a better treasure in the form of a sword among the Geats. This he laid on Beowulf's lap, and gave him seven thousand (hides of land),¹ a house, and a throne. Each of them alike had inherited land in that country, an estate and ancestral domain, but Hygelac in particular had the wider kingdom, and was therefore higher in rank.

Afterwards, in days to come, it happened through battle-clashes that the broad kingdom came into the control of Beowulf—after Hygelac lay low and battle-swords under the shield-covering were the death of Heardred, when the Battle Scylfings, hardy fighters, sought him out among the victorious people and assailed in violence the nephew of Hereric. He ruled it properly for fifty winters—he was a wise king, ancient guardian of his native land—until on dark nights a dragon began to rule, he who on a high heath watched over a hoard, a towering stone-barrow; below there ran a path, unknown to men. Into that place went some man. (Six imperfect lines follow at this point, perhaps to the effect that the intruder took part of the sleeping dragon's treasure, and so aroused his anger.)

By no means had he of his own accord intentionally broken into the dragon's hoard—he who harmed himself sorely—but because of need the slave of some one of the sons of warriors, homeless, fled from blows of hate, and fell within, a man troubled with sin. There were a great many old treasures in that earth-house

¹ A hide of land varied from 80 to 120 acres.

which some man or other in past days had carefully hidden there, huge legacy of a kingly tribe, precious treasures. Death had taken them all away in days past, and then that one of the people's warriors who lived longest mourned the loss of friends, expected the same fate, that he would be allowed to enjoy the long-accumulated treasures only a short while. A barrow already existed on the plain near the water, new on the promontory, cunningly secured. There did the shepherd of rings bear a huge quantity of princely treasure, of beaten gold, and said a few words: "Hold now, O Earth, since warriors may not, the possessions of princes. Of a surety brave men found it first in thee; battle death, horrible slaughter, took away every one of my warriors who gave up this life, the joys of the hall. No one have I to wear the sword or burnish the ornamented tankard, the precious drinking vessel; the warriors have gone elsewhere. The hard helmet, adorned with gold, will be deprived of its decorations; the cleaners sleep who had to polish the war-masks. And the coat-of-mail that in battle awaited mid the splintering of shields the bite of swords decays along with the fighter, nor may the ringed corselet travel far with the war-leader, by the warrior's side. No joy of harp is there, sport of the gleewood, no good hawk swinging about the hall, no swift steed pawing the castle court. Loathly death has sent on many of the race of men." Thus, sorrowing, he bemoaned his unhappiness, one after many, went about sadly by day and night, until death's flood touched at his heart.

The aged twilight-robber found the joyous treasure standing open, he who, flaming, visits the barrows, the naked, wrathful dragon, he who flies by night enveloped in fire; people on earth fear him mightily. He must seek

out treasure in the earth, where he, winters-old, guards heathen gold; he is none the better for that.

Thus had the nation's scourge for three hundred winters guarded in the earth a huge and mighty treasure house, until a certain man enraged him; bore to his chief an adorned flagon and begged his lord for a treaty of peace. Then was the hoard plundered, the wealth of rings carried off, the boon granted to the poor man. For the first time the lord looked on the antique work of mortals.

When the dragon awoke, the strife was begun. He sniffed along the stone, the bold-hearted one found the footprints of the enemy—warily he had stepped forth close by the dragon's head. Thus may an unfated man easily survive trouble and misery, if he has the favor of the Ruler. The hoard-warden sought eagerly along the ground; he wanted to find the man who had done him, sleeping, this injury; burning and enraged he swung often about the mound. There was not any man in that waste; nevertheless he joyed in the thought of war, of battle work; now and then he dashed into the barrow, looked for the precious vessel. Soon he discovered that some man had found the gold, the wonderful treasures. The hoard-warden awaited with difficulty until evening came; the shepherd of rings was swollen with rage; the loathly one would revenge with fire his beloved drinking-vessel. Then day passed, as the dragon wished. He would not wait long on the wall, but went forth flaming, equipped with fire. The outburst was terrible for the people in the land, and of their lord it quickly made a sore ending.

Then the fiend began to spew forth fire, to burn the happy homesteads; the beacon of fire blazed, a terror to men; the baleful air-flyer would leave nothing with life. The warfare of the dragon was seen all about,

the wrath of the hostile one near and far, how the devastator hated and humbled the people of the Geats. He sped back to his hoard, to his dark mission before the break of day. He had engulfed the land-dwellers with fire, with flame and brand; he trusted in his cave, his valor, and his wall. His hope deceived him.

To Beowulf the terror was made known, quickly and truthfully, that his own home, best of dwellings, was being consumed in billows of fire, the gift-seat of the Geats. That was a sorrow for the brave man's soul, greatest of griefs; the wise one thought that he had bitterly angered the Ruler, the Eternal Lord, contrary to ancient law. Within him his breast welled with dark thoughts, as was not usual with him. The fire-dragon had consumed with fire the stronghold of the people, the ocean front, the fortress; therefore the war-king, the lord of the Weders, planned revenge. The shield of warriors, the lord of nobles, commanded that they make him a wondrous war-shield, wholly of iron; he knew for a truth that forest-wood could not help, linden against fire. The long-tried warrior was doomed to meet the end of his days, of worldly life, and the dragon with him, though he had held the hoarded wealth for long. The lord of rings scorned to seek out the wide-flier with a band, a large army. He did not fear the conflict for himself, nor did he value at all the serpent's valor, his might and courage, because in times past, braving distress, he had survived many contests, battle-attacks, after he, the victorious one, had purged Hrothgar's hall, and in the fight had crushed the kinsmen of Grendel, of loathly race.

Not the least of hand-to-hand conflicts was that in which Hygelac was slain, when the king of the Geats, gracious ruler of the people, son of Hrethel, suffered a gory death in Friesland, in the battle-rush, beaten down

by the sword. Thence Beowulf escaped by his own might, by swimming; thirty coats-of-mail had he on his arm when he plunged into the water. No reason to exult about their fight on foot had the Hetwaras who, carrying their shields, went out against him. Only a handful escaped from that fighter to see their homes. Thus did the son of Ecgtheow, wretched and alone, swim back over the water's expanse to his people. There Hygd offered him treasure and a realm, rings and a throne; she did not trust her child to hold the ancestral seats against foreign tribes since Hygelac was dead. But not at all were the distressed people able to induce the prince to be Heardred's lord or to accept the royal power. Nevertheless Beowulf strengthened him among the people by friendly advice, in good will and respect, until Heardred grew older, ruled the Weder Geats.

Exiled men, the sons of Ohthere, sought him out over the sea; they had rebelled against the protector of the Scylfings, the best of sea-kings who in Sweden dispensed treasure, a famous ruler. That was the end of Heardred; for his hospitality the son of Hygelac obtained a mortal wound by stroke of sword, and Ongentheow's son returned to visit his home when Heardred lay dead, and let Beowulf hold the throne, and rule the Geats. He was a good king.

He kept in mind a requital for the national disaster in later days, became the friend of the destitute Eadgils; with his people he supported the son of Ohthere over the wide sea, with warriors and with weapons; he wrought vengeance afterwards by means of cold and distressing journeys, deprived the king of life.

So the son of Ecgtheow survived each onslaught, each fierce battle, mighty deeds, until that one day when he had to battle with the serpent. Then the lord

of the Geats, swollen with rage, one of twelve, went to see the dragon. He had by that time learned how the feud arose, the wickedness to men; the famous treasure-vessel had come into his possession by the hand of the informer. He was the thirteenth man in the company, he who brought about the beginning of strife, a sorrowful captive; humiliated, he had to lead the way thither. Against his will he went to the place where he knew there was an earth-hall, a cave underground near the welling of the waters, the battling of the waves; it was full of treasures and ornaments. The monstrous guardian, ready fighter, for a long time ruled over the gold-treasure under the earth; the purchase of that was not easy for any man.

Then the king bold in battle sat on the headland, and there the treasure-friend of the Scyldings greeted his hearth-companions. His spirit was sad, restless, and ready for death, fate immeasurably near which was to greet the old man, to seek the treasure of his soul, to sunder life from body; not for long was the spirit of the hero enclosed in flesh.

Beowulf spoke, son of Ecgtheow: "Many battle-rushes in my youth did I survive, seasons of strife; I remember them all. I was seven winters old when the prince of treasures, the lord of nations, received me from my father. King Hrethel took me and kept me, gave me treasure and food, was mindful of our kinship; never through life was I, a warrior in the battle, more distasteful to him than his own sons, Herebeald and Hæthcyn, or my own Hygelac. For the eldest a bed of death was unfittingly spread through the deeds of his kinsman, for Hæthcyn laid him low, his lord, with an arrow from his horn-bow; he missed his mark and shot his relative—one brother the other—with his bloody missile. That fight was not to be expiated by money,

wickedly sinful, saddening to the heart; nevertheless, the prince had to lose his life, unavenged. So it is sad for an aged man to experience that his son, a youth, should hang on the gallows; then may he recite a dirge, a sad song, when his son hangs a joy to the raven, and he, old and ancient, can help him in no wise. Constantly he is reminded every morning of the departure of his son. He cares not to wait for another heir within the stronghold when the one has had his share of deeds through the violence of death. Sorrowfully he sees in his son's house the joyous hall forsaken, a windy lodging, bereft of joy; the rider sleeps, the warrior in his grave; no sound of harp is there, mirth in the courts, as formerly there was. He goes to his chamber and sings alone there a lament for the other; everything seems too roomy for him, fields and dwelling-place. Thus the protector of the Weders bore the welling sorrow of his heart for Herebeald; he could in no way settle that feud with the murderer; nor could he persecute the warrior with hostile deeds, though he was not dear to him. Thus because of the sorrow which wounded him he abandoned the joys of men, he chose God's light. To his sons he left when he died, as a wealthy man does, his land and stronghold.

Then was there hostility and fighting between the Swedes and the Geats, strife in common across the wide water, bitter enmity, after Hrethel died. . . ."

(Omitted ll. 2472—2510: the Swedes attack the Geats and kill Hæthcyn. Eofor kills the Swedish king Ongentheow.)

Beowulf discoursed—with boasting words spoke for the last time: "I ventured on many battles in my youth. Once more will I, the aged guardian of the people, seek the conflict and do great deeds, if the wicked destroyer seeks me out from his earth-hall."

Then for the last time, he addressed each one of his men, valiant helmet-bearers, dear companions: "I would not bear sword or weapon against the serpent, if I knew how I might otherwise fulfill my boast against the monster, as I once did against Grendel. But in this battle I expect hot deadly fire, breath and poison; therefore I shall have my shield and coat-of-mail. I will not flee a foot-step from the warden of the mound, but at the wall it shall be to us both as Wyrð, the ruler of each man, allots. I am bold at heart, so that I can abstain from boasting against the flying fighter. Await on the hill, O warriors armor clad, in your corselets, to see which of us two may the better survive his wounds after the bloody attack. This is not your adventure nor is it fitting for any man except me to show his might against the monster, perform heroic deeds. By my courage I shall gain gold, or war, the fearful foe of life, shall take away your lord."

Then the mighty warrior rose by his shield, bold under his helmet, wore his coat-of-mail under the stony cliffs, trusted to his own strength; that is not the way of a coward! Then he, who, excelling in manly virtues, had survived many wars, battle-rushes, when troops clash, saw near the wall a stone arch, and out of it a stream gushing from the barrow; the surging stream was hot with deadly fire. He could not any while endure unburned the hollow passage near the hoard, because of the dragon's fire. The prince of the Weder Geats, enraged as he was, let forth a word from his breast, stormed stoutly. His voice, clear in battle, resounded about the grey stone. Hate was aroused, the guardian of the hoard recognized the voice of man. There was no time to ask for peace. First came the breath of the monster from out the rock, hot, harmful vapor; the ground resounded. Under the mound the

warrior, ruler of the Geats, swung his shield against the awful stranger; the coiled creature's heart was aroused to seek battle. The brave war-king had already drawn his sword, ancient survival, sharp of edge; each one of the slaughterous ones was terrified of the other. Boldly the prince of friends stood by his tall shield, and the serpent quickly coiled itself; he waited in his armor. The flaming one twistingly moved toward him, hastened to his doom. The shield protected well the life and body of the famous prince for a shorter time than he had hoped if he at that time, on the first day, was to gain glory—but Fate had not so decreed. Up he swung his hand, the lord of the Geats struck the fearful monster with his sword, so that the brown edge turned on his bone, bit the less deeply just when the king, sorely beset, had need of it. Then the guardian of the barrow was enraged after the battle-stroke, threw forth deadly fire; his fatal flames shot far. The generous friend of the Geats boasted not in triumph; the naked war-weapon, the sword good in times past, failed him in the strife, as it should not have done. That was not a pleasant venture—that the famous son of Ecgtheow should have to leave the earth, should take up his dwelling elsewhere against his will. So must every-man give up his allotted days.

It was not long before the terrible ones met again. The guardian of the hoard took heart, his breast swelled again with his breath, and he who formerly ruled a nation endured anguish, embraced by flame. By no means did his band of warriors, sons of princes, stand by him valorously in a body, but they slunk back to the woods and preserved their lives. The heart of one alone welled with sorrow; ties of friendship may never be put aside by him who thinks aright.

Wiglaf he was called, the son of Weohstan, a favorite

warrior, a man of the Scyflings, kinsman of Ælfhere. He saw that his helmeted lord was tortured by the heat. Then he remembered the favors which Beowulf had granted him in days past, the rich homestead of the Wægmundings and all folk-rights, such as his father had enjoyed. He could not forbear: he seized the shield, the yellow linden, and drew his ancient sword. (Omitted ll. 2610-2625: the history of Wiglaf's sword.) This was the first time that the young warrior was to meet the battle-rush with his lord. His courage did not melt away, nor his kinsman's heirloom fail in the battle; the serpent learned that when they had come together.

Wiglaf spoke, said many fitting words to his companions—his heart was sad: "I remember the time when we drank the mead, when we promised our lord in the beer-hall, he who gave us rings, that we would repay him for the armor, the helmets and the hard swords, if a need like this happened to him. He who of his own will chose us from the band for the expedition, reminded us of glory, and gave me these treasures, because he considered us good warriors, brave helmet-bearers, although our lord, the shepherd of the people, planned to do this mighty work by himself, because among men he had accomplished the most famous exploits, done daring deeds. Now has the day come when our lord needs the strength of valiant fighters. Let us go to him, help our leader while now the hot, fierce fire-horror is about him. God knows that as for myself I had rather that the flame should embrace my body with my gold-giver. It does not seem right to me that we should carry back our shields to our dwelling, unless we may first kill the foe and defend the life of the lord of the Weders. I know well that this is not a reward for past deeds, that he alone of the

Geat host should suffer affliction, sink in the battle. Side by side we shall wear sword and helmet, corselet and armor." Then he rushed through the deadly fumes, went, helmet on head, to the aid of his lord, said these few words: "Dear Beowulf, do all that which you promised in your youth, that you would never in your lifetime let your glory fail; now must you, valiant noble, defend your life with all your strength. I will help you."

After these words, the serpent, the evil vicious spirit, came raging a second time, glaring with surging fire, attacked his foes, the detested men. Wiglaf's shield was burnt to the boss by the waves of fire, his corselet could not give the young warrior aid; but the young man fought bravely under his kinsman's shield when his own was burned up by the flames. Then again the battle-king remembered his glory, valiantly struck with his battle-sword, so that it stuck in the head, violently forced in. Nægling snapped, Boewulf's sword, old and gray, failed him in the battle. It was not granted that iron swords should help him in the strife; the hand was too strong, so I have heard, which by its stroke taxed too much every blade; it was no better for him when he carried such a wonderfully hard weapon to the contest.

Then a third time the bold fire-drake, the scourge of the people, remembered the battle, rushed on the hero, when opportunity favored him, hot and fighting fierce, and seized his whole neck in his sharp jaws; he was drenched in blood; the gore welled up in waves.

I heard that in this extremity of the king the hero stood upright and showed his courage, his strength and daring as was his nature. He cared not about the head, but the brave man's hand was burned while he helped his kinsman, so that he, the warrior in his armor, struck the vicious foe a little lower, and the

sword, bright and adorned, plunged in, and the fire began to subside at once. Then the king himself got command of his wits, drew the war-blade, keen and battle-sharp, which he wore on his corselet. The protector of the Weders slashed through the middle of the dragon. They felled the foe, valiantly drove out his life; and they both, kinsmen nobles, had destroyed him. Such should a warrior be, a thane in time of need. For the prince that was the last hour of victory, of labor in this world.

Then the wound which the earth-dragon had given him began to burn and to swell; soon he discovered that within his breast the poison welled fiercely. Then the warrior went over and sat down, wisely meditating, on a seat by the wall. He looked on the work of giants; saw how the everlasting earth-house contained within it stony arches fast on pillars. Then the thane, surpassing good, with his hands bathed with water the famous prince drenched with blood, his generous lord worn out with battle, and loosened his helmet.

Beowulf spoke in spite of his wound, his mortal hurt; he well knew that he had ended his days, his earthly joy; his tale of days was all told, death immeasurably near: "Now I should wish to give my battle-equipment to my son, if it had been granted me that any heir, issue of my body, should come after me. I have ruled this people for fifty winters; there was not a neighboring king who dared meet me with swords, overcome me with fear. In my dwelling I awaited my destiny, guarded well my own, did not seek intrigues, did not wickedly swear many oaths. In all this may I, sick with mortal wounds, have comfort; because the Ruler of men may never accuse me of the murder of kinsmen when my life departs from my body. Now go quickly, dear Wiglaf, and view the hoard under the old

rock, now that the serpent lies prone, sleeps sorely wounded, despoiled of treasure. Hurry, that I may see the age-old wealth, the gold hoard, may well view the bright, precious gems, so that I the more resignedly because of this treasure may leave life and the people over which I have long ruled.”

‘Then, I have heard, the son of Weohstan after these words quickly obeyed his wounded lord, sick from the battle, and went in his armor, his linked corselet, under the roof of the cave. Then, triumphant, as he passed by the seat, the valiant thane saw many a precious ornament, gleaming gold spread on the ground, marvelous things on the wall, and the den of the serpent, the old dusk-flier, cups standing, vessels of past men, with no one to polish them, bereft of their ornaments. There was many a helmet, old and rusty, many a bracelet cunningly fastened. Easily may treasure, gold in the earth, overpower any man, hide it who will. He saw, too, hanging high above the hoard, a banner of gold, greatest of wonders worked by hand, woven with skill of hands. From this gleamed forth a light, so that he could see the ground and gaze upon the treasure. There was no trace of the serpent there, because the sword had carried him off. Then I heard how one man sacked the cave, the ancient work of giants, and as he wished heaped his bosom with drinking-vessels and dishes; the banner, too, he took, brightest of beacons. The sword of the aged lord—its edge was iron—had earlier harmed the long-time guardian of the treasures, who in defense of the hoard had shot forth his flaming terror of fire, spouting fire at midnight, until he died by slaughter.

The messenger was in haste, anxious to return, urged on by the precious objects. He was eager to know whether he, the brave-hearted one, would find alive

in the place where he had left him the lord of the Weders, deprived of his might. So, carrying the treasures, he found the famous ruler, his lord, bleeding, at the end of his life. Again he began to dash water on him until speech broke forth from the treasure of his mind. Beowulf spoke, the aged warrior in anguish—he viewed the gold: “I give thanks to the Lord of all, to the King of Glory, to the everlasting God for the precious things which I here gaze upon, because I was permitted to gain such things for my people before the day of my death. Now have I sold my lengthened span of life for the treasure hoard; do you provide hereafter for the needs of the nation. I may not remain here longer. Command my valiant warriors to build after the pyre a splendid barrow on a headland by the sea, which shall tower as a reminder to my people, high on Hroneness so that sailors shall in the future call it Beowulf’s barrow, they who drive far their vessels over the darkening waters.” The brave-hearted prince took off from his neck the golden collar, presented it to the thane, to the young warrior, and his gold-adorned helmet, ring and corselet; told him to make good use of them. “You are the survivor of our race, of the Wægmundings; Fate has swept away all my kinsmen, my valiant warriors, to their doom. I must follow them.” That was the last thought expressed by the old warrior before he chose the funeral fire, hot, overwhelming flames; his soul departed from his breast to journey to the judgment of true men.

So it was painful for the young man to see his dearest one on the ground, suffering wretchedly at the end of his life. His slayer, the horrible earth-dragon, lay dead also, deprived of life, overcome by affliction. No longer might the coiled serpent rule the ring-treasure, because iron blades, the hard, battle-scarred work

of the hammer had done for him, so that the far-flier fell dead from his wounds upon the ground, nearby his hoard-house. No more at midnight did he joyfully sweep through the air and proud of his treasures display himself, but he fell to the earth through the hand-strength of the chieftain. I have heard, however, that no mighty man, courageous though he be in all his deeds, was able to rush against the breath of the poisonous destroyer or plunder with his hands the ring-hall, if he found the guard watching, inhabiting the cave. Beowulf had paid for his share of the princely treasures with his life. Each had travelled to the end of fleeting life.

Not long after, the cowards left the wood, faint-hearted oath-breakers, ten of them together, who but just now had not dared to hasten with their spears to their prince in his great need; in shame they bore their shields, their war-gear, to the spot where the aged warrior lay. They gazed on Wiglaf. He sat worn-out, the foot-soldier by the shoulders of his lord; they tried to rouse him with water, but in vain. He could not keep on earth, much as he wished, the chieftain's life, nor change at all the Ruler. For each man the doom of God had to be fulfilled, just as it now does.

Then a bitter answer came quickly from the young man for those who formerly had lost their courage. Wiglaf spoke, the son of Weohstan, the man sad at heart—he looked on the unloved ones: "This indeed can he say who wishes to speak the truth, that the prince who gave you those treasures, the battle-harness that you there stand in, (often the prince at the ale-bench gave to the sitters in the hall, to his thanes, helmet and corselet, the best that he could find far or near), utterly cast away war-harness in his distress, when war overtook him. No reason had the king to boast about his companions, although God, the Ruler of victories,

granted that he alone might avenge himself with the sword, when courage was called for. Little protection could I give him at the battle, and yet I began beyond my strength to help my kinsman. When with my sword I struck the deadly enemy he was the weaker; the fire surged forth less fiercely from his head. Too few warriors thronged about the chief when distress overtook him. Now shall sharing of treasure and gifts of swords, all hereditary estates, and joy be wanting to your people; each one of your kinsmen must wander deprived of his privileges, when nobles far and wide learn of your flight, your inglorious deed. Death is better for every warrior than a disgraceful life."

Then he commanded that the result of battle be announced in the enclosure over the sea-cliff where the band of nobles, the shield-bearers, had sat the forenoon long, anxious about two things: his last day and the return of the dear man. Silent but a little about the latest news was he who rode to the promontory, and he spoke truthfully to them all: "Now the generous giver of the Weders, the ruler of the Geats, is fast in his death-bed, by the deeds of the dragon lies on his bed of slaughter. Likewise there lies by him the enemy of his life, sick with dagger-wounds; with sword he could not by any means wound the monster. By Beowulf sits Wiglaf, the son of Weohstan, the noble by the dead; distressed in mind, he holds guard over friend and foe.

(Omitted ll. 2911-3007: the forecast of war when the Franks and Frisians and Swedes learn of the death of Beowulf. The messenger recalls the battle of Ravenswood and the death of Ongentheow.)

Now haste is best, that we should look upon the king there and bring him to the pyre who gave us rings. Not merely one object should be consumed with the brave

one, for there is the treasure hoard, untold gold dearly purchased and now at last rings bought with his own life; these the fire shall devour, the flames embrace. No warrior shall wear precious thing in remembrance of him or beautiful maiden a necklace, but saddened and bereft of gold they shall tread a strange country often, not once, now that the army leader has put aside laughter, sport, and joy. Therefore shall many a spear, cold in the morning, be grasped, lifted by the hand; no music of harp shall wake the warriors, but the black raven, poised above the slaughtered, shall talk much and tell the eagle how he fared at the feast when with the wolf he plundered the slain."

Thus the valiant man was rehearsing sad stories, nor did he err much in regard to deeds and words.

The whole band arose; by Earnanæs mournfully they went to view the marvelous sight, the tears falling. There they found lifeless, keeping his bed of rest on the sand, him who in former times had given them rings; there had passed the brave one's last day on which the war-king, prince of the Weders, had suffered his awful death. First they saw a stranger creature there, the loathly serpent lying opposite on the plain. The fire-dragon, horrible monster, was consumed with flames; it was fifty feet long on its bed. Sometimes at night it roved the joyous air; down again it came to seek its den. There it was, stiff in death, had for the last time enjoyed its cave. By him stood cups and pitchers, dishes lay there and precious swords, rusty and eaten through, as though in the earth's bosom they had dwelt a thousand winters. The glorious inheritance, the gold of men of past days, was surrounded by a charm so that no one could touch the treasure-hall, if God himself, king of victories (He is the protection

of men) had not allowed whom he wished to open the hoard, even such a man as seemed fitting to him.

Then it was clear that the course had not prospered of him who had hidden wrongfully the treasure under the wall. The warden had formerly killed off a few; then the feud was bitterly avenged. A wonder it is where a brave warrior shall come to the end of his life, when the man may no longer dwell in the mead-hall with his kinsmen. Thus it was with Beowulf when he sought the warden of the barrow, and violent contests; he himself did not know in what way his leave-taking from the world should come about. So the famous lords, when they put the treasure there, had placed a deep curse on it until doomsday, that the man who sacked that place should be guilty of sin, confined in idol-temples, fast in hell-bonds, tormented grievously.

Wiglaf, son of Weohstan, spoke: "Often shall many a noble endure hardship, as has befallen us. We could not convince our dear lord, shepherd of the kingdom, that he should not attack the gold-warden, should let him lie where he had been a long while, dwell in his abode until the end of the world, fulfill destiny. The hoard is seen, bitterly bought; too strong was the fate that tempted the man thither. I was in there and saw it all, the treasures in the hall, when it was permitted me; in no friendly manner was the journey under the earth-wall granted to me. Hastily I seized a huge burden of hoarded treasures, bore it out hither to my king. He was still alive, wise and alert; many things the old man said in his trouble, commanded me to greet you, ordered that you build fittingly for your lord's deeds a high barrow by the funeral pyre, great and splendid, because he was of men the most worthy warrior over the wide earth while he was permitted to enjoy the wealth of his castle. Let us hasten now to see

again and view the heap of precious gems, the marvel under the wall. I shall guide you, that close up you may see the rings and the broad gold. Let the bier be ready, speedily prepared when we come out, and then let us bear our lord, the loved man, where he shall abide long with the Ruler."

Then the son of Weohstan, the battle-bold hero, commanded many warriors, houseowners, chiefs, from afar to carry to the brave one wood for the pyre: "Now shall the fire devour the ruler of warriors; the bright flames soar about him who often awaited the shower of iron, when a storm of arrows, shot from the strings, fled over the shield-wall; the shaft did its duty, hastened by its feather-trappings, served by the barb."

The wise son of Weohstan hereupon summoned from the band thanes of the king, seven in all, and the best; and the warrior, one of eight, went under the roof of the enemy; he who went in front bore in his hand a torch. It was not then decided by lot who should ransack the hoard, when the warriors saw a portion of it remaining unguarded in the hall, lying perishing; little did any regret who hastily carried out the precious treasures. And they shoved the dragon, the serpent, over the cliff, let the waves take the keeper of the treasure, the flood enfold him. Countless gold was laden on a wagon, and the noble, the hoary warrior, was borne to Hroneness.

The Geats then prepared for him a splendid funeral pyre on the ground, hung about with helmets, shields, and shining corselets, as he had prayed them. In the midst the mourning warriors laid their famous prince, their loved lord. Warriors began to light on the barrow the greatest of funeral pyres. The black wood-smoke mounted up over the flame; the roar of the flame mingled with the noise of lamentation; the tumult

of the winds was silenced until the fire had broken up the bony frame, hot to the very heart. Saddened they lamented their misery, the death of their lord. And the old woman, hair bound up, sang sadly, said again and again that she feared troubled days for herself, much slaughter, and terror.

Heaven swallowed the smoke.

Then the Weders raised a mound on the cliff, high and broad it was, widely seen by sailors, and in ten days they built the hero's beacon; the ashes from the fire they surrounded with a wall, such as wise men could find most worthy of him. In the barrow they put rings and jewels and such ornaments as hostile men had earlier taken from the hoard. They left the treasure of nobles to the earth to hold, the gold in the sand, where it still is as useless to men as it formerly was.

Then about the barrow rode the battle bold ones, sons of nobles, twelve all told; they would tell their trouble, mourn for the king, chant a dirge, and speak about the man. They esteemed his nobility, praised his valiant deed with all their power. So it is fitting that a man should praise his lord, love him in his heart, when he must flee forth from the body.

Thus the Geats, hearth-companions, bemoaned the fall of their lord; said that he had been the mildest and the gentlest of kings, the kindest to his people, and most eager for praise.

(c. 725?)

DEOR'S LAMENT

WELAND well knew the power of sorrow,
The stout-hearted earl endured distress,
Sadness and longing he had for his comrades,
Woe cold as winter; woe oft-times he suffered,

When Nithhad laid misfortune upon him,
Made the strong man weak with laming wounds.
Yet that he overcame; so this may I.

Not for her brothers' death was Beadohild
So sore at heart as for her own distress,
When she at last had fully understood 10
She was with child; never might she
Without shame think how this should come to be.
Yet that she overcame; so this may I.

We have heard much about Mæthilde;
The desires of the Geat so boundless were
That pain took all his sleep from him.
Yet that he overcame; so this may I.

What way Theodoric ruled the Mærings' burg
For thirty winters long, is widely known.
Yet that he overcame; so this may I. 20

We have heard of Eormanric,
Wolf-hearted king; a wide folk he ruled,
The country of the Goths; that was a grim king.
Sat many a man in sorrow bound,
Woeful of mind, and wishing desperately
That kingdom were o'erthrown.
Yet that they overcame; so this may I.

Seated, weary with care, deprived of joy,
His heart is dark with sorrow; and he thinks
His share of misery will never end. 30
But let him rather think, that in this world
The mighty Lord draws near,
To many a man shows mercy,
A certain joy, to some a deal of woe.

Of my own story this I tell,
I once was minstrel to the Heodenings,
Dear to my lord; and Deor was my name.
For many winters long I knew a pleasant place,
A noble lord, 'til Heorrenda now,

Song-crafty man, has taken all the land 40
 That once the earl my patron gave to me.
 Yet that he overcame; so this may I.

THE BANISHED WIFE'S COMPLAINT

THIS song I sing alone most sorrowfully
 Of my own fate: and truly can I say
 That of the evils I have known since I grew up,
 Ills new and old, no one was more than this:
 Ever the shame of exile I endure!

Erstwhile my lord departing left his people,
 Went o'er the strife of waves; sad in the dawn I won-
 dered

In what far land my lord might be.
 Then I went faring, followed to seek him,
 A friendless wretch in my woeful need. 10
 The kin of that man so devised a plot
 With cunning thought, that they parted us,
 So that we two divided should live in the world
 Wretchedly, and great woe was mine.

Here my lord bade me make my home;
 Few loved ones had I in this land,
 Few noble friends. For this my heart is sad,
 That I should find the man most meet for me
 So sad a wretch, false-hearted, murderous,
 Yet blithe of bearing. Full often we had sworn 20
 That nothing less than death alone
 Should part us; that is all changed now.
 Now it is as it had never been,
 Our friendship! I shall evermore
 Endure the deep hate of my dearest love!
 He bade me dwell within the wooded grove

Under an oak-tree, in an earthen cave;
Old is this earth-hall, I am full of longing;
Dark are the valleys and the hills are high,
A bitter city, overgrown with briars, 30
A joyless dwelling. Here often grief assails me
For my lord's faring. Friends there are on earth
Loving and living, keeping the marriage bed,
But I go alone at the dawning
Under the oak-tree, into the earth-cave!
There I must sit the whole long summer day,
There I must weep my wretched banishment,
My many troubles, since I never may
Rest from my sorrows, the desires and woe
This life has brought me. 40

Ever may that young man be wretched,
As bitterly sad as his bearing is blithe—
May he know breast-care, let him know suffering,
Let his joy in the world turn to woe in his heart.
May he be exiled in a strange country,
In a far folk-land, since my friend must sit
Under stone cliffs, berimed with storm—
My weary-hearted lord—water flows about
His dreary dwelling! He suffers great sorrow;
Too often he remembers a happier dwelling. 50
Woe is his, who longing
Shall await the beloved!

A LOVE-LETTER

MY HOME was on the beach near the sea-shore;
Beside the ocean's brim I dwelt, fast fixed
In my first abode. Few of mankind there were
That there beheld my home in the solitude,
But every morn the brown wave encircled me

With its watery embrace. Little weened I then
That I should ever, earlier or later,
Though mouthless, speak among the mead-drinkers
And utter words. A great marvel it is,
Strange in the mind that knoweth it not, 10
How the point of the knife and the right hand,
The thought of a man, and his blade therewith,
Shaped me with skill, that boldly I might
So deliver a message to thee
In the presence of us two alone,
That to other men our talk
May not make it more widely known.

Now to thee will I tell apart
That I sprang from the stock of the tree-race.
In other lands the skill of man is wont 20
To set on me cunning characters.
Then in a vessel I traverse the salt waves;
Oft in the prison of a ship have I visited lands,
Where my lord has sent me,
And lofty castles. Now am I come hither
In the keeled vessel, and now shalt thou know
How thou mayest think in thy heart
Of the love of my lord. I dare maintain
That there thou wilt find true loyalty.

Lo! he that carved this stave bade me 30
Pray thee, O jewel-decked, to remember
In thy heart the word-pledges,
Which in days of yore ye two oft spake,
While in the mead-castles ye were permitted
To have a home, to dwell in the same land,
To practice friendship. Force drove him
Out of the land. Now hath he bidden me
Earnestly to urge thee to sail the sea
When thou hast heard on the brow of the hill
The mournful cuckoo call in the wood. 40

Then let no living man keep thee
 From the journey or hinder thy going.
 Betake thee to the sea, the home of the mew;
 Seat thee in the boat, that southward from here
 Beyond the road of the sea thou mayest find the man
 Where waits thy prince in hope of thee.
 No joy of the world can be greater for him
 In his thoughts, as he hath told me,
 Than that the all-ruling God should grant you
 That ye together should hereafter 50
 Give out treasure to men and comrades,
 Golden rings. Enough he hath
 Of beaten gold, of wealth and treasure,
 Since among strangers he hath a home,
 A fair abode; there obey him many
 Noble warriors, though here my banished lord,
 Driven by necessity, pushed out his boat
 And on the path of the waves was forced to run,
 To journey on the water-way, eager for escape,
 To stir the waves. Now hath the man 60
 Overcome his trouble; he hath no lack of pleasures,
 Of steeds or of jewels, or of mead-joys,
 Or of any treasure on earth,
 O prince's daughter, if he have thee
 In spite of the old threat against you both.

I put together S R
 EA W and M(D?), to assure thee with an oath
 That while he lives he will fulfill
 The pledge and the love-troth
 That in days of old he often spake. 70

THE WANDERER

MANY a lonely man at last comes to honor,
 Merits God's mercy, though much he endured

On wintry seas, with woe in his heart,
Dragging his oar through drenching-cold brine,
Homeless and houseless and hunted by Wyrd.

These are the words of a way-faring wanderer,
This is his song of the sorrow of life,
Slaughter of foemen, felling of kinsmen:

Often alone in the dark before dawning,
All to myself my sorrow I tell. 10
Friend have I none to whom I may open
My heart's deep secret, my hidden spring of woe.
Well do I know 'tis the way of the high-born,
Fast in his heart to fetter his feelings,
Lock his unhappiness in the hold of his mind.
Spirit that sorrows withstandeth not destiny,
Heart that complaineth plucketh no help.
A haughty hero will hide his suffering,
Manfully master misery's pang.
Thus stricken with sorrow, stript of my heritage, 20
Far from kinsmen and country and friends,
Grimly I grappled my grief to my bosom,
Since long time ago, my giver of bounty
Was laid in the earth, and left me to roam
Watery wastes, with winter in my heart.
Forsaken I sought a shielder and protector;
Far and near I found none to greet the wanderer,
No master to make him welcome in his wine-hall;
None to cheer the cheerless, or the friendless to be-
friend.

He who has lost all his loved companions 30
Knoweth how bitter a bedfellow is sorrow.
Loneliness his lot, not lordly gold,
Heart-chilling frost, not harvest of plenty.

Oft he remembers the mirth of the mead-hall,
Yearns for the days of his youth, when his dear lord
Filled him with abundance. Faded are those joys!
He shall know them no more; no more shall he listen
To the voice of his lord, his leader and counsellor.
Sometimes sleep and sorrow together
Gently enfold the joyless wanderer: 40
Bright are his dreams, he embraces his lord again,
Kisses his liege, and lays on his knee
Head and hands as in happy days,
When he thanked for a boon his bountiful giver.

Wakes with a start the homeless wanderer;
Nought he beholds but the heaving surges,
Seagulls dipping and spreading their wings,
Scurries of snow and the scudding hail.
Then his heart is all the heavier,
Sore after sweet dreams sorrow reviveth. 50
Fain would he hold the forms of his kinsmen,
Longingly leans to them, lovingly greets them;
Slowly their faces swim into distance;
No familiar greeting comes from the fleeting
Companies of kinsmen. Care ever shadows
The way of the traveller, whose track is on the waters,
Whose path is on the billows of the boundless deep.

Surely I see not how I should keep
My heart from sinking, heavy with sorrow,
When all life's destiny deeply I ponder,— 60
Men that are suddenly snatched in their prime,
High-souled heroes; so the whole of this earth
Day by day droopeth and sinketh to decay . . .
How dread is the doom of the last desolation,
When all the wealth of the world shall be waste,
He that is wise may learn, if he looks

Abroad o'er this land, when lonely and ruinous,
 Wind-swept walls, waste are standing;
 Tottering towers, crusted with frost,
 Crumbling wine-halls, bare to the sky.
 Dead is their revelry, dust are the revellers!
 Some they have fallen on far fields of battle,
 Some have gone down in ships on the sea;
 Some were the prey of the prowling gray wolf,
 Some by their loved ones were laid in the earth.
 The Lord of the living hath levelled their mansions,
 Silenced the sound of the singing and laughter.
 Empty and bare are all their habitations,
 Wondrous works of the giants of old.

70

He that considers this scene of desolation,
 And this dark life deeply doth ponder,—
 Battle and blood-shed, burning and slaughter,
 It bringeth to mind, and mournfully he asks:
 Where is the warrior, where is the war-horse?
 Where is the giver of bounty, where are the boon-
 companions,
 The "dream and the gleam" that gladdened the hall?
 Alas the bright ale-cup, alas the brave warrior!
 Alas the pride of princes! Their prime is no more;
 Sunk under night's shadow, as though it had never
 been!

80

Where lusty warriors thronged, this lone wall towers,
 Weird with dragon-shapes, wondrously carven;
 Storm of ash-spears hath stricken the heroes,
 Blood-thirsty weapons, Wyrd the supreme.
 Wintry blasts now buffet these battlements;
 Dreary snow-storms drift up the earth,
 The terror of winter when wild and wan
 Down from the north with the darkness drives
 The ruinous scourge of the ruthless hail.

90

All this life is labor and sorrow,
Doom of destiny darkens o'er earth. 100
Wealth is fleeting, friends are fleeting,
Man is fleeting, maid is fleeting,
All this earth's foundations utterly shall pass.

THE SEA-FARER

The Old Sailor:

TRUE is the tale that I tell of my travels,
Sing of my sea-faring sorrows and woes;
Hunger and hardship's heaviest burdens,
Tempest and terrible toil of the deep,
Daily I've borne on the deck of my boat.
Fearful the welter of waves that encompassed me,
Watching at night on the narrow bow,
As she drove by the rocks, and drenched me with
spray.

Fast to the deck my feet were frozen,
Gripped by the cold, while care's hot surges 10
My heart o'erwhelmed, and hunger's pangs
Sapped the strength of my sea-weary spirit.

Little he knows whose lot is happy,
Who lives at ease in the lap of the earth,
How, sick at heart, o'er icy seas,
Wretched I ranged the winter through,
Bare of joys, and banished from friends,
Hung with icicles, stung by hail-stones.
Nought I heard but the hollow boom
Of wintry waves, or the wild swan's whoop. 20
For singing I had the solan's scream;
For peals of laughter, the yelp of the seal;
The sea-mew's cry, for the mirth of the mead-hall.
Shrill through the roar of the shrieking gale
Lashing along the sea-cliff's edge,

THE SEA-FARER

Pierces the ice-plumed petrel's defiance,
And the wet-winged eagle's answering scream.

Little he dreams that drinks life's pleasure,
By danger untouched in the shelter of towns
Insolent and wine-proud, how utterly weary 30
Oft I wintered on open seas.
Night fell black, from the north it snowed
Harvest of hail.

The Youth:

Oh wildly my heart
Beats in my bosom and bids me to try
The tumble and surge of seas tumultuous,
Breeze and brine and the breakers' roar.
Daily hourly drives me my spirit
Outward to sail, far countries to see.
Liveth no man so large in his soul, 40
So gracious in giving, so gay in his youth,
In deeds so daring, so dear to his lord,
But frets his soul for his sea-adventure,
Fain to try what fortune shall send.
Harping he heeds not, nor hoarding of treasure;
Nor woman can win him, nor joys of the world.
Nothing doth please but the plunging billows;
Ever he longs, who is lured by the sea.
Woods are abloom, the wide world awakens,
Gay are the mansions, the meadows most fair; 50
These are but warnings, that haste on his journey
Him whose heart is hungry to taste
The perils and pleasures of the pathless deep.

The Old Sailor:

Hearst the cuckoo mournfully calling?
The summer's watchman sorrow forebodes.

What does the landsman that wantons in luxury,
What does he reck of the rough sea's woe,
The cares of the exile, whose keel has explored
The uttermost parts of the Ocean-ways!

The Youth:

Sudden my soul starts from her prison-house, 60
Soareth afar o'er the sounding main;
Hovers on high, o'er the home of the whale;
Back to me darts the bird-sprite and beckons,
Winging her way o'er woodland and plain,
Hungry to roam, and bring me where glisten
Glorious tracts of glimmering foam.
This life on land is lingering death to me,
Give me the gladness of God's great sea.

SWALLOWS

THE breeze bears a small folk
Over the mountain-side. Very dark they are,
Swart and black-coated. They fly in a flock
Singing strongly; loudly they call.
They live in wild places, but sometimes they come
To the houses in town, to the dwellings of men.
What is their name?

BOOK-MOTH

A MOTH ate a word; that I thought
A curious thing, when I heard that marvel,
That a worm should devour the word of a man,
A thief in the dark eat a mighty saying,
In its strong abode. Yet the thieving sprite
Was no whit the wiser for the words he ate.

SWAN

MY GARMENT is silent when I move on the earth,
Whether I dwell in a village or swim in the sea.
Sometimes my wings and the high air
Lift me over the dwellings of men,
And the strength of the clouds
Carries me wide over the folk. My fretted wings
Loudly resound and make a song;
Clearly they sing when I am far above
Fold and flood, a flying spirit.

CÆDMON'S HYMN

PRAISE we the Lord
Of the heavenly kingdom,
God's power and wisdom,
The works of His hand;
As the Father of glory,
Eternal Lord,
Wrought the beginnings
Of all His wonders!
Holy Creator!
Warden of men!
First, for a roof,
O'er the children of earth,
He stablished the heavens,
And founded the world,
And spread the dry land
For the living to dwell in.
Lord Everlasting!
Almighty God!

CÆDMON (LATE SEVENTH CENTURY)

(Beginning of *Genesis B*)

“EAT freely of the fruit of every other tree. From that one tree refrain. Beware of its fruit. And ye shall know no dearth of pleasant things.”

Eagerly they bowed them down before the King of heaven, and gave Him thanks for all, for His teachings and counsels. And He gave them that land to dwell in. Then the Holy Lord, the Steadfast King, departed into heaven. And the creatures of His hand abode together on the earth. They had no whit of care to grieve them, but only to do the will of God for ever. Dear were they unto God as long as they would keep His holy word.

The Holy Lord, All-wielding God, with mighty hand wrought ten angel-orders in whom He trusted well, that they would do Him service, and work His will. Therefore God gave them reason, with His own hands shaped them, and stablished them in bliss. But one He made so great and strong of heart, He let him wield such power in heaven next unto God, so radiant-hued He wrought him, so fair his form in heaven which God had given, that he was like unto the shining stars. He should have sung his Maker's praise, and prized his bliss in heaven. He should have thanked his Lord for the great boon He showered on him in the heavenly light, and let him long enjoy. But he turned him to a worse thing, and strove to stir up strife against the Highest Lord of heaven, who sitteth on the throne of glory.

Dear was he to our Lord. Nor could it long be hid from God that pride was growing in His angel's

heart. He set himself against his Leader, scoffed at God with boasting, and would not serve Him. He said his form was beautiful and bright, gleaming and fair of hue. Nor could he find it in his heart to serve the Lord God, or be subject to Him. It seemed to him that he had greater strength and larger following than Holy God might have. Many words the angel spake in his presumption. By his own power alone he thought to build a stronger throne and mightier in heaven. He said his heart was urging him to toil, to build a stately palace in the north and west. He said he doubted in his heart if he would still be subject unto God:

"Why should I slave?" quoth he. "I need not serve a master. My hands are strong to work full many a wonder. Power enough have I to rear a goodlier throne, a higher in the heavens. Why should I fawn for His favour, or yield Him such submission? I may be God as well as He! Brave comrades stand about me; stout-hearted heroes who will not fail me in the fray. These valiant souls have chosen me their lord. With such peers one may ponder counsel, and gain a following. Devoted are these friends and faithful-hearted; and I may be their lord and rule this realm. It seemeth no wise right to me that I should cringe a whit to God for any good. I will not serve Him longer."

Now when God had heard all this, how His angel was beginning to make presumptuous head against his Leader, speaking rash words of insolence against his Lord, needs must he make atonement for that deed, endure the woe of strife, and bear his punishment, most grievous of all deaths. And so doth every man who wickedly thinketh to strive with God, the Lord of might.

Then Almighty God, High Lord of heaven, was filled

with wrath, and hurled him from his lofty throne. He had gained his Master's hate, and lost His favour. God's heart was hardened against him. Wherefore he needs must sink into the pit of torment because he strove against the Lord of heaven. He banished him from grace and cast him into hell, into the deep abyss where he became a devil. The Fiend and all his followers fell from heaven; three nights and days the angels fell from heaven into hell. God changed them all to devils. Because they heeded not His deed and word, therefore Almighty God hurled them into darkness, deep under earth, crushed them and set them in the murk of hell. There through the never-ending watches of the night the fiends endure an unremitting fire. Then at the dawn cometh an east wind, and bitter frost, ever a blast of fire or storm of frost. And each must have his share of suffering wrought for his punishment. Their world was changed when God filled full the pit of hell with His foes!

But the angels who kept their faith with God dwelt in the heights of heaven. The other fiends who waged so fierce a war with God lay wrapped in flames. They suffer torment, hot and surging flame in the midst of hell, broad-stretching blaze of the fire and bitter smoke, darkness and gloom, because they broke allegiance unto God. Their folly and the angel's pride deceived them. They would not heed the word of God. Great was their punishment! They fell, through folly and through pride, to fiery depths of flame in hell. They sought another home devoid of light and filled with fire—a mighty flaming death. The fiends perceived that through the might of God, because of their presumptuous hearts and boundless insolence they had won a measureless woe.

Then spake their haughty king, who formerly was

fairest of the angels, most radiant in heaven, beloved of his Leader and dear unto his Lord, until they turned to folly, and Almighty God was moved to anger at their wantonness, and hurled him down to depths of torment on that bed of death. He named him with a name, and said their leader should be called from thenceforth Satan. He bade him rule the black abyss of hell in place of striving against God. Satan spake—who now must needs have charge of hell and dwell in the abyss—in bitterness he spake who once had been God's angel, radiant-hued in heaven, until his pride and boundless arrogance betrayed him, so that he would not do the bidding of the Lord of hosts. Bitterness was welling in his heart; and round him blazed his cruel torment. These words he spake:

“This narrow place is little like those other realms we know on high in heaven, allotted by my Lord, though the Almighty hath not granted us to hold our state, or rule our kingdom. He hath done us wrong to hurl us to the fiery depths of hell, and strip us of our heavenly realm. He hath ordained that human kind shall settle there. That is my greatest grief, that Adam—wrought of earth—should hold my firm-set throne and live in joy, while we endure this bitter woe in hell.

“Alas! Could I but use my hands and have my freedom for an hour, one winter hour, then with this host I would—But bands of iron crush me down, the bondage of my chains is heavy. I am stripped of my dominion. Firmly are hell's fetters forged upon me. Above me and below a blaze of fire! Never have I seen a realm more fatal—flame unassuaged that surges over hell. Ensnaring links and heavy shackles hold me. My ways are trammelled up; my feet are bound; my hands are fastened. Closed are the doors of hell,

the way cut off. I may not escape out of my bonds, but mighty gyves of tempered iron, hammered hot, press hard upon me. God hath set His foot upon my neck. So I know the Lord of hosts hath read the purpose of my heart, and knew full well that strife would grow between our host and Adam over the heavenly realm, had I the freedom of my hands.

“But now we suffer throes of hell, fire and darkness, bottomless and grim. God hath thrust us out into the black mists. He cannot charge upon us any sin or evil wrought against Him in His realm! Yet hath He robbed us of the light and cast us into utter woe. Nor may we take revenge, nor do Him any evil because He stripped us of the light. He hath marked out the borders of the world, and there created man in His own image, with whom He hopes again to people heaven, with pure souls. We needs must ponder earnestly to wreak this grudge on Adam, if we may, and on his children, and thwart His will if so we may devise.

“No longer have I any hope of light wherein He thinketh long to joy, in bliss among His angel hosts; nor may we ever bring this thing to pass, that we should change the purpose of Almighty God. Let us therefore turn the heavenly kingdom from the sons of men, since we may not possess it, cause them to lose His favour and turn aside from the command He laid upon them. Then shall His wrath be kindled, and He shall cast them out from grace. They shall seek out hell and its grim gulf, and in this heavy bondage we may have the sons of men to serve us.

“Begin now and plan this enterprise. If ever in older days, when happily we dwelt in that good kingdom, and held possession of our thrones, I dealt out princely treasure to any thane, he could not make requital for my gifts at any better time than now, if

some one of my thanes would be my helper, escaping outward through these bolted gates, with strength to wing his way on high where, new-created, Adam and Eve, surrounded with abundance, dwell on earth—and we are cast out hither in this deep abyss. They are now much dearer unto God, and own the high estate and rightful realm which we should have in heaven! Good fortune is allotted to mankind.

“My soul is sorrowful within me, my heart is sore, that they should hold the heavenly realm for ever. But if in any wise some one of you could bring them to forsake God’s word and teaching, soon would they be less pleasing unto Him! If they break His commandment, then will His wrath be kindled. Their high estate shall vanish; their sin shall have requital, and some grim penalty. Take thought now how ye may ensnare them. I shall rest softly in these chains if they lose heaven. Whoso shall bring this thing to pass shall have reward for ever, of all that we may win to our advantage, amid these flames. I will let him sit next me, whoever shall return to hell proclaiming that they have set at naught, by word and deed, the counsels of the King of heaven and been displeasing to the Lord.”

Then God’s enemy began to make him ready, equipped in war-gear, with a wily heart. He set his helm of darkness on his head, bound it full hard, and fastened it with clasps. Many a crafty speech he knew, many a crooked word. Upward he beat his way and darted through the doors of hell. He had a ruthless heart. Evil of purpose he circled in the air, cleaving the flame with fiendish craft. He would fain ensnare God’s servants unto sin, seduce them and deceive them that they might be displeasing to the Lord. With fiendish craft he took his way until he came on Adam upon earth, the finished handiwork of God, full wisely wrought,

and his wife beside him, loveliest of women, performing many a goodly service since the Lord of men appointed them His ministers.

And by them stood two trees laden with fruit and clothed with increase. Almighty God, High King of heaven, had set them there that the mortal sons of men might choose of good and evil, weal and woe. Unlike was their fruit! Of the one tree the fruit was pleasant, fair and winsome, excellent and sweet. That was the tree of life. He might live for ever in the world who ate of that fruit, so that old age pressed not heavily upon him, nor grievous sickness, but he might live his life in happiness for ever, and have the favour of the King of heaven here on earth. And glory was ordained for him in heaven, when he went hence.

The other tree was dark, sunless, and full of shadows: that was the tree of death. Bitter the fruit it bore! And every man must know both good and evil; in this world abased he needs must suffer, in sweat and sorrow, who tasted of the fruit that grew upon that tree. Old age would rob him of his strength and joy and honour, and death take hold upon him. A little time might he enjoy this life, and seek out the murky realm of flame, and be subject unto fiends. There of all perils are the worst for men for ever. And that the evil one knew well, the wily herald of the fiend who fought with God. He took the form of a serpent, coiled round the tree of death by devil's craft, and plucked the fruit, and turned aside again where he beheld the handiwork of the King of heaven. And the evil one in lying words began to question him:

"Hast thou any longing, Adam, unto God? His service brings me hither from afar. Not long since I was sitting at His side. He sent me forth upon this journey to bid thee eat this fruit. He said thy strength

and power would increase, thy mind be mightier, more beautiful thy body, and thy form more fair. He said thou wouldest lack no good thing on the earth when thou hast won the favour of the King of heaven, served thy Lord with gladness, and deserved His love.

"In the heavenly light I heard Him speaking of thy life, praising thy words and works. Needs must thou do His bidding which His messengers proclaim on earth. Broad-stretching are the green plains of the world, and from the highest realms of heaven God ruleth all things here below. The Lord of men will not Himself endure the hardship to go upon this journey, but sendeth His ministers to speak with thee. He sendeth tidings unto thee to teach thee wisdom. Do His will with gladness! Take this fruit in thy hand; taste and eat. Thy heart shall grow more roomy and thy form more fair. Almighty God, thy Lord, sendeth this help from heaven."

And Adam, first of men, answered where he stood on earth: "When I heard the Lord, my God, speaking with a mighty voice, He bade me dwell here keeping His commandments; gave me this woman, this lovely maid, bade me take heed and be not tempted to the tree of death and utterly beguiled, and said that he who taketh to his heart one whit of evil shall dwell in blackest hell. Though thou art come with lies and secret wiles, I know not that thou art an angel of the Lord from heaven. Lo! I cannot understand thy precepts, thy words or ways, thy errand or thy sayings. I know what things our Lord commanded when I beheld Him nigh at hand. He bade me heed His word, observe it well, and keep His precepts. Thou art not like to any of His angels that ever I have seen, nor hast thou showed me any token that my Lord hath sent of grace and favour. Therefore I cannot hearken to thy teachings.

Get thee hence! I have my faith set firm upon Almighty God, who with His own hands wrought me. From His high throne He giveth all good things, and needeth not to send His ministers."

Then turned the fiend with wrathful heart to where he saw Eve standing on the plains of earth, a winsome maid. And unto her he said, the greatest of all ills thereafter would fall on their descendants in the world:

"I know God's anger will be roused against you, when from this journey through far-stretching space I come again to Him, and bring this message, that ye refuse to do His bidding, as He hath sent commandment hither from the East. He needs must come to speak with you, forsooth, nor may His minister proclaim His mission! Truly I know His wrath will be kindled against you in His heart!

"But if thou, woman, wilt hearken to my words, thou mayest devise good counsel. Bethink thee in thy heart to turn away His vengeance from you both, as I shall show thee. Eat of this fruit! Then shall thine eyes grow keen, and thou shalt see afar through all the world, yea! unto the throne of God, thy Lord, and have His favour. Thou mayest rule the heart of Adam, if thou incline to do it and he doth trust thy words, if thou wilt tell him truly what law thou hast in mind, to keep God's precepts and commandments. His heart will cease from bitter strife and evil answers, as we two tell him for his good. Urge him earnestly to do thy bidding, lest ye be displeasing to the Lord your God. If thou fulfill this undertaking, thou best of women, I will not tell our Lord what evil Adam spake against me, his wicked words accusing me of falsehood, saying that I am eager in transgression, a servant of the Fiend and not God's angel. But I know well the angel race, and the high courts of heaven. Long ages have I

served the Lord my God with loyal heart. I am not like a devil."

So he urged with lies and luring wiles, tempting the woman unto sin, until the serpent's counsel worked within her—for God had wrought her soul the weaker—and her heart inclined according to his teaching. Transgressing God's commandment, from the fiend she took the fatal fruit of the tree of death. Never was worse deed wrought for men! Great is the wonder that Eternal God, the Lord, would let so many of His thanes be tricked with lies by one who brought such counsel. She ate the fruit and set at naught the will and word of God.

Then could she see afar by gift of the fiend, whose lies deceived and artfully ensnared her, so that it came to pass the heavens appeared to her more radiant, and the earth and all the world more fair, the great and mighty handiwork of God, though she beheld it not by human wisdom; but eagerly the fiend deceived her soul and gave her vision, that she might see afar across the heavenly kingdom. Then spake the fiend with hostile purpose—and naught of profit did he counsel:

"Now mayest thou behold, most worthy Eve, nor need I tell thee, how fair thy beauty and thy form how changed, since thou didst trust my words and do my bidding. A radiance shineth round about thee, gleaming splendour, which I brought forth from God on high. Thou mayest touch it! Tell Adam what vision thou hast and power by my coming. And even yet, if he will do my bidding with humble heart, I will give him of this light abundantly, as I have given thee, and will not punish his reviling words, though he deserves no mercy for the grievous ill he spake against me. So shall his children live hereafter! When they do evil,

they must win God's love, avert His doom, and gain the favour of their Lord for ever!"

Then the lovely maid, fairest of women that ever came into this world, went unto Adam. She was the handiwork of the King of heaven, though tricked with lies and utterly undone, so that through fiendish craft and devil's fraud she needs must be displeasing to the Lord, forfeit God's favour, and lose her glory and her heavenly home. So often evil dwelleth with that man who doth not shun it when he hath the power.

Of the fatal apples some she carried in her hands and some lay on her breast, the fruit of the tree of death whereof the Lord of lords, the Prince of glory, had forbidden her to eat, saying His servants need not suffer death. The Holy Lord bestowed a heavenly heritage and ample bliss on every race, if they would but forgo that fruit alone, that bitter fruit, which the mortal tree brought forth upon its boughs. That was the tree of death which the Lord forbade them!

But the fiend, who hated God, and loathed the King of heaven, deceived with lies Eve's heart and erring wisdom, and she believed his words and did his bidding, and came at last to think his counsels were indeed from God, as he so cunningly had said. He showed to her a token, and gave her promise of good faith and friendly purpose. Then to her lord she said:

"Adam, my lord! This fruit is sweet and pleasing to the heart; this radiant messenger is God's good angel! I know by his attire he is a herald of our Lord, the King of heaven. Better to win his favour than his wrath! If thou to-day hast spoken aught of evil, yet will he still forgive thee, if we will do his will. Of what avail this bitter strife against the herald of thy Lord? We need his favour. For he may plead our cause before Almighty God, the King of heaven.

"I can behold where in the south and east He who shaped the world sits veiled in splendour. I see the angels circling round His throne, in winged flight, unnumbered myriads, clothed in beauty. Who could give me such discernment, except it be sent straight from God, the Lord of heaven? Widely may I hear and widely see through all the world across the broad creation. I hear the hymns of rapture from on high. Radiance blazes on my soul without and within since first I tasted of the fruit. Lo! my good lord! I bring thee in my hand this fruit, and give thee freely of it. I do believe that it is come from God, and brought by His command, as this messenger declared in words of truth. It is not like aught else on earth except, as this herald saith, it cometh straight from God."

Long she pled, and urged him all the day to that dark deed, to disobey their Lord's command. Close stood the evil fiend, inflaming with desire, luring with wiles, and boldly tempting him. The fiend stood near at hand who on that fatal mission had come a long, long way. He planned to hurl men down to utter death, mislead them and deceive them, that they might lose the gift of God, His favour and their heavenly realm. Lo! well the hell-fiend knew they must endure God's anger and the pains of hell, suffer grim misery and woe, since they had broken God's commandment, when with his lying words he tricked the beauteous maid, fairest of women, unto that deed of folly, so that she spake according to his will; and aided her in tempting unto evil the handiwork of God.

Over and over the fairest of women pled with Adam, until she began to incline his heart so that he trusted the command the woman laid upon him. All this she did with good intent, and knew not that so many evils, such grim afflictions, would come upon mankind, when

she was moved to hearken to the counsels of the evil herald; but she hoped to win God's favour by her words, showing such token and such pledge of truth unto the man that the mind of Adam was changed within his breast, and his heart began to bend according to her will.

From the woman he took both death and hell, although it did not bear these names, but bore the name of fruit. The sleep of death and fiends' seduction; death and hell and exile and damnation—these were the fatal fruit whereon they feasted. And when the apple worked within him and touched his heart, then laughed aloud the evil-hearted fiend, capered about, and gave thanks to his lord for both:

"Now have I won thy promised favour, and wrought thy will! For many a day to come is man undone, Adam and Eve! God's wrath shall be heavy upon them, for they have scorned His precepts and commandments. Wherefore they may no longer hold their heavenly kingdom, but they must travel the dark road to hell. Thou needest not feel sorrow in thy heart, as thou liest in thy bonds, nor mourn in spirit that men should dwell in heaven above, while we now suffer misery and pain in realms of darkness, and through thy pride have lost our high estate in heaven and goodly dwellings. God's anger was kindled against us because in heaven we would not bow our heads in service before the Holy Lord. It pleased us not to serve Him. Then was God moved to wrath and hard of heart, and drove us into hell; cast a great host into hell-fire, and with His hands prepared again in heaven celestial thrones, and gave that kingdom to mankind.

"Blithe be thy heart within thy breast! For here to-day are two things come to pass: the sons of men shall lose their heavenly kingdom, and journey unto

thee to burn in flame; also heart-sorrow and affliction are visited on God. Whatever death we suffer here is now repaid on Adam in the wrath of God and man's damnation and the pangs of death. Therefore my heart is healed, my soul untrammelled in my breast. All our injuries are now avenged, and all the evil that we long have suffered. Now will I plunge again into the flame, and seek out Satan, where he lieth in hell's shadows, bound with chains."

Then the foul fiend sank downward to the wide-flung flames and gates of hell wherein his lord lay bound. But Adam and Eve were wretched in their hearts; sad were the words that passed between them. They feared the anger of the Lord their God; they dreaded the wrath of the King of heaven. They knew that His command was broken.

The woman mourned and wept in sorrow (she had forfeited God's grace and broken His commandment) when she beheld the radiance disappear which he who brought this evil on them had showed her by a faithless token, that they might suffer pangs of hell and untold woe. Wherefore heartsorrow burned within their breasts. Husband and wife they bowed them down in prayer, beseeching God and calling on the Lord of heaven, and prayed that they might expiate their sin, since they had broken God's commandment. They saw that their bodies were naked. In that land they had as yet no settled home, nor knew they aught of pain or sorrow; but they might have prospered in the land if they had done God's will. Many a rueful word they uttered, husband and wife together. And Adam spake unto Eve and said:

"O Eve! a bitter portion hast thou won us! Dost thou behold the yawning gulf of hell, sunless, insatiate? Thou mayest hear the groans that rise therefrom! The

heavenly realm is little like that blaze of fire! Lo! fairest of all lands is this, which we, by God's grace, might have held hadst thou not hearkened unto him who urged this evil, so that we set at naught the word of God, the King of heaven. Now in brief we mourn that evil mission! For God Himself bade us beware of sin and dire disaster. Now thirst and hunger press upon my heart whereof we formerly were ever free. How shall we live or dwell now in this land if the wind blow from the west or east, south or north, if mist arise and showers of hail beat on us from the heavens, and frost cometh, wondrous cold, upon the earth, or, hot in heaven, shineth the burning sun, and we two stand here naked and unclothed? We have no shelter from the weather, nor any store of food. And the Mighty Lord, our God, is angry with us. What shall become of us? Now I repent me that I prayed the God of heaven, the Gracious Lord, and of my limbs He wrought thee for my helpmeet, since thou hast led me unto evil and the anger of my Lord. Well may I repent to all eternity that ever I beheld thee with mine eyes!"

Then spake Eve, the lovely maid, fairest of women. (She was the work of God, though led astray by power of the fiend):

"Well mayest thou upbraid me, my dear Adam! But thou canst not repent one whit more bitterly in thy heart than my heart repenteth."

And Adam answered her: "If I but knew the will of God, the penalty I needs must pay, thou couldest not find one more swift to do it, though the Lord of heaven bade me go forth and walk upon the sea. The ocean-stream could never be so wondrous deep or wide that ever my heart would doubt, but I would go even unto the bottom of the sea, if I might work the will of God.

I have no wish for years of manhood in the world now that I have forfeited the favour of my Lord, and lost His grace. But we may not be thus together, naked. Let us go into this grove, and under the shelter of this wood."

And they turned and went weeping into the green wood, and sat them down apart from one another to wait the fate the Lord of heaven should assign them, since they had lost their former state and portion which Almighty God had given them. And they covered their bodies with leaves, and clothed them with the foliage of the wood, for they had no garments. And both together bowed in prayer; and every morning they besought Almighty God, the Gracious Lord, that He would not forget them, but would teach them how to live thenceforward in the light.

BEDE (673-735)

From *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People, Book I, chap. 1. Of the Situation of Britain and Ireland, and of their ancient inhabitants.*

BRITAIN, an island in the ocean, formerly called Albion, is situated between the north and west, facing, though at a considerable distance, the coasts of Germany, France, and Spain, which form the greatest part of Europe. It extends 800 miles in length towards the north, and is 200 miles in breadth, by which its compass is made to be 3675 miles. To the south, as you pass along the nearest shore of the Belgic Gaul, the first place in Britain which opens to the eye is the city of Rutubi Portus, by the English corrupted into Reptacestir. The distance from hence across the sea to Gessoriacum, the nearest shore of the Morini, is fifty

miles, or as some writers say, 450 furlongs. On the back of the island, where it opens upon the boundless ocean, it has the islands called Orcades. Britain excels for grain and trees, and is well adapted for feeding cattle and beasts of burden. It also produces vines in some places, and has plenty of land and water-fowls of several sorts; it is remarkable also for rivers abounding in fish, and plentiful springs. It has the greatest plenty of salmon and eels; seals are also frequently taken, and dolphins, as also whales; besides many sorts of shell-fish, such as mussels, in which are often found excellent pearls of all colors, red, purple, violet, and green, but mostly white. There is also a great abundance of cockles, of which the scarlet dye is made; a most beautiful color, which never fades with the heat of the sun or the washing of the rain; but the older it is, the more beautiful it becomes. It has both salt and hot springs, and from them flow rivers which furnish hot baths, proper for all ages and sexes, and arranged according. For water, as St. Basil says, receives the heating quality when it runs along certain metals, and becomes not only hot but scalding. Britain has also many veins of metals, as copper, iron, lead and silver; it has much and excellent jet, which is black and sparkling, glittering at the fire, and when heated, drives away serpents; being warmed with rubbing, it holds fast whatever is applied to it, like amber. The island was formerly embellished with twenty-eight noble cities, besides innumerable castles, which were all strongly secured with walls, towers, gates, and locks. And, from its lying almost under the North Pole, the nights are light in summer, so that at midnight the beholders are often in doubt whether the evening twilight still continues, or that of the morning is coming on; for the sun, in the night, returns under the earth, through the

northern regions at no great distance from them. For this reason the days are of a great length in summer, as, on the contrary, the nights are in winter, for the sun then withdraws into the southern parts, so that the nights are eighteen hours long. Thus the nights are extraordinarily short in summer, and the days in winter, that is, of only six equinoctial hours. Whereas, in Armenia, Macedonia, Italy, and other countries of the same latitude, the longest day or night extends but to fifteen hours, and the shortest to nine.

This island at present, following the number of the books in which the Divine law was written, contains five nations, the English, Britons, Scots, Picts, and Latins, each in its own peculiar dialect cultivating the sublime study of Divine truth. The Latin tongue is, by the study of the Scriptures, become common to all the rest. At the first this island had no other inhabitants but the Britons, from whom it derived its name, and who, coming over into Britain, as is reported, from Armorica, possessed themselves of the southern parts thereof. When they, beginning at the south, had made themselves masters of the greatest part of the island, it happened that the nation of the Picts, from Scythia, as is reported, putting to sea in a few long ships, were driven by the winds beyond the shores of Britain, and arrived on the northern coasts of Ireland, where, finding the nation of the Scots, they begged to be allowed to settle among them, but could not succeed in obtaining their request. Ireland is the greatest island next to Britain, and lies to the west of it; but as it is shorter than Britain to the north, so, on the other hand, it runs out far beyond it to the south, opposite to the northern parts of Spain, though a spacious sea lies between them. The Picts, as has been said, arriving in this island by sea, desired to have a place granted

them, in which they might settle. The Scots answered that the island could not contain them both; but "We can give you good advice," said they, "what to do; we know there is another island, not far from ours, to the eastward, which we often see at a distance, when the days are clear. If you will go thither, you shall have our assistance." The Picts, accordingly, sailing over into Britain, began to inhabit the northern parts thereof, for the Britons were possessed of the southern. Now the Picts had no wives, and asked them of the Scots; who would not consent to grant them upon any other terms, than that when any difficulty should arise, they should choose a king from the female royal race than from the male; which custom, as is well known, has been observed among the Picts to this day. In process of time, Britain, besides the Britons and the Picts, received a third nation, the Scots, who, migrating from Ireland under their leader, Reuda, either by fair means, or by force of arms, secured to themselves those settlements among the Picts which they still possess. From the name of their commander, they are to this day called Dalreudins; for, in their language, Dal signifies a part.

Ireland, in breadth, and for wholesomeness and serenity of climate, far surpasses Britain; for the snow scarcely ever lies there above three days: no man makes hay in the summer for winter's provision, or builds stables for his beasts of burden. No reptiles are found there, and no snake can live there; for, though often carried thither out of Britain, as soon as the ship comes near the shore, and the scent of the air reaches them, they die. On the contrary, almost all things in the island are good against poison. In short, we have known that when some persons have been bitten by serpents, the scrapings of leaves of books that were brought out of Ireland, being put into water, and given them to

drink, have immediately expelled the spreading poison, and assuaged the swelling. The island abounds in milk and honey, nor is there any want of vines, fish, or fowl; and it is remarkable for deer and goats. It is properly the country of the Scots, who, migrating from thence, as has been said, added a third nation in Britain to the Britons and the Picts. There is a very large gulf of the sea, which formerly divided the nation of the Picts from the Britons; which gulf runs from the west very far into the land, where, to this day, stands the strong city of the Britons, called Alcluith. The Scots, arriving on the north side of this bay, settled themselves there.

Book I, chap. 12

THE ROMANS AID THE BRITONS

From that time, the south part of Britain, destitute of armed soldiers, of martial stores, and of all its active youth, which had been led away by the rashness of the tyrants, never to return, was wholly exposed to rapine, as being totally ignorant of the use of weapons. Whereupon they suffered many years under two very savage foreign nations, the Scots from the west, and the Picts from the north. We call these foreign nations, not on account of their being seated out of Britain, but because they were remote from that part of it which was possessed by the Britons; two inlets of the sea lying between them, one of which runs in far and broad into the land of Britain, from the Eastern Ocean, and the other from the Western, though they do not reach so as to touch one another. The eastern has in the midst of it the city Giudi. The western has on it, that is, on the right hand thereof, the city Alcluith, which in

their language signifies the Rock Cluith, for it is close by the river of that name.

On account of the irruption of these nations, the Britons sent messengers to Rome with letters in mournful manner, praying for succors, and promising perpetual subjection, provided that the impending enemy should be driven away. An armed legion was immediately sent them, which, arriving in the island, and engaging the enemy, slew a great multitude of them, drove the rest out of the territories of their allies, and having delivered them from their cruel oppressors, advised them to build a wall between the two seas across the island, that it might secure them, and keep off the enemy; and thus they returned home with great triumph. The islanders raising the wall, as they had been directed, not of stone, as having no artist capable of such a work, but of sods, made it of no use. However, they drew it for many miles between the two bays or inlets of the seas, which we have spoken of; to the end that where the defense of the water was wanting, they might use the rampart to defend their borders from the irruptions of the enemies. Of which work there erected, that is, of a rampart of extraordinary breadth and height, there are evident remains to be seen at this day. It begins at about two miles' distance from the monastery of Abercurnig, on the west, at a place called in the Pictish language, Peanfahel, but in the English tongue, Penneltun, and running to the westward, ends near the city Alcluith.

But the former enemies, when they perceived that the Roman soldiers were gone, immediately coming by sea, broke into the borders, trampled and overran all places, and like men mowing ripe corn, bore down all before them. Hereupon messengers are again sent to Rome, imploring aid, lest their wretched country should be utterly extirpated, and the name of a Roman province,

so long renowned among them, overthrown by the cruelties of barbarous foreigners, might become utterly contemptible. A legion is accordingly sent again, and, arriving unexpectedly in autumn, made great slaughter of the enemy, obliging all those that could escape, to flee beyond the sea; whereas before, they were wont yearly to carry off their booty without any opposition. Then the Romans declared to the Britons, that they could not for the future undertake such troublesome expeditions for their sake, advising them rather to handle their weapons like men, and undertake themselves the charge of engaging their enemies, who would not prove too powerful for them, unless they were deterred by cowardice; and, thinking that it might be some help to the allies, whom they were forced to abandon, they built a strong stone wall from sea to sea, in a straight line between the towns that had been there built for fear of the enemy, and not far from the trench of Severus. This famous wall, which is still to be seen, was built at the public and private expense, the Britons also lending their assistance. It is eight feet in breadth, and twelve in height, in a straight line from east to west, as is still visible to beholders. This being finished, they gave that dispirited people good advice, with patterns to furnish them with arms. Besides, they built towers on the sea-coast to the southward, at proper distances, where their ships were, because there also the interruptions of barbarians were apprehended, and so took leave of their friends, never to return again.

After their departure, the Scots and Picts, understanding that they had declared they would come no more, speedily returned, and growing more confident than they had been before, occupied all the northern and farthest part of the island, as far as the wall. Hereupon a timorous guard was placed upon the wall,

where they pined away day and night in the utmost fear. On the other side, the enemy attacked them with hooked weapons, by which the cowardly defendants were dragged from the wall, and dashed against the ground. At last, the Britons, forsaking their cities and wall, took to flight and were dispersed. The enemy pursued, and the slaughter was greater than on any former occasion; for the wretched natives were torn in pieces by their enemies, as lambs are torn by wild beasts. Thus, being expelled from their dwellings and possessions, they saved themselves from starvation, by robbing and plundering one another, adding to the calamities occasioned by foreigners, by their own domestic broils, till the whole country was left destitute of food, except such as could be procured in the chase.

Book I, chap. 15

THE ARRIVAL OF THE ANGLES.

In the year of our Lord 449, Martian being made emperor with Valentinian, and the forty-sixth from Augustus, ruled the empire seven years. Then the nation of the Angles, or Saxons, being invited by the aforesaid king, arrived in Britain, with three long ships, and had a place assigned them to reside in by the same king, in the eastern part of the island, that they might thus appear to be fighting for their country, whilst their real intentions were to enslave it. Accordingly they engaged with the enemy, who were come from the north to give battle, and obtained the victory; which, being known at home in their own country, as also the fertility of the country, and the cowardice of the Britons, a more considerable fleet was quickly sent over, bringing a still greater number of men, which, being added to

the former, made up an invincible army. The newcomers received of the Britons a place to inhabit, upon condition that they should wage war against their enemies for the peace and security of the country, whilst the Britons agreed to furnish them with pay. Those who came over were of the three most powerful nations of Germany—Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. From the Jutes are descended the people of Kent, and of the Isle of Wight, and those also in the province of the West-Saxons who are to this day called Jutes, seated opposite to the Isle of Wight. From the Saxons, that is, the country which is now called Old Saxony, came the East-Saxons, the South-Saxons, and the West-Saxons. From the Angles, that is, the country which is called Anglia, and which is said, from that time, to remain desert to this day, between the provinces of the Jutes and the Saxons, are descended the East-Angles, the Midland-Angles, Mercians, all the race of the Northumbrians, that is, of those nations that dwell on the north side of the river Humber, and the other nations of the English. The two first commanders are said to have been Hengist and Horsa, of whom Horsa, being afterwards slain in battle by the Britons, was buried in the eastern parts of Kent, where a monument, bearing his name, is still in existence. They were the sons of Victgilsus, whose father was Vecta, son of Woden; from whose stock the royal race of many provinces deduce their original. In a short time, swarms of the aforesaid nations came over into the island, and they began to increase so much that they became terrible to the natives themselves who had invited them. Then, having on a sudden entered into league with the Picts, whom they had by this time repelled by the force of their arms, they began to turn their weapons against their confederates. At first they obliged them to furnish a greater quantity of provisions; and, seeking an

occasion to quarrel, protested that unless more plentiful supplies were brought them, they would break the confederacy and ravage all the island; nor were they backward in putting their threats in execution. In short, the fires kindled by the hands of these pagans, proved God's just revenge for the crimes of the people; not unlike that which, being once lighted by the Chaldeans, consumed the walls and city of Jerusalem. For the barbarous conquerors acting here in the same manner, or rather the just Judge ordaining that they should so act, they plundered all the neighboring cities and country, spread the conflagration from the eastern to the western sea, without any opposition, and covered almost every part of the devoted island. Public as well as private structures were overturned; the priests were everywhere slain before the altars; the prelates and the people, without any respect of persons, were destroyed with fire and sword; nor was there any to bury those who had been thus cruelly slaughtered. Some of the miserable remainder, being taken in the mountains, were butchered in heaps. Others, spent with hunger, came forth and submitted themselves to the enemy for food, being destined to undergo perpetual servitude, if they were not killed even upon the spot. Some, with sorrowful hearts, fled beyond the seas. Others, continuing in their own country, led a miserable life among the woods, rocks, and mountains, with scarcely enough food to support life, and expecting every moment to be their last.

Book I, chap. 23

THE MISSION OF AUGUSTINE

In the year of our Lord 582, Maurice, the fifty-fourth from Augustus, ascended the throne, and reigned twen-

ty-one years. In the tenth year of his reign, Gregory, a man renowned for learning and behavior, was promoted to the apostolical see of Rome, and presided over it thirteen years, six months and ten days. He, being moved by Divine inspiration, in the fourteenth year of the same emperor, and about the one hundred and fiftieth after the coming of the English into Britain, sent the servant of God, Augustine, and with him several other monks, who feared the Lord, to preach the word of God to the English nation. They having, in obedience to the pope's commands, undertaken that work, were, on their journey, seized with a sudden fear, and began to think of returning home, rather than proceed to a barbarous, fierce, and unbelieving nation, to whose very language they were strangers; and this they unanimously agreed was the safest course. In short, they sent back Augustine, who had been appointed to be consecrated bishop in case they were received by the English, that he might, by humble entreaty, obtain of the holy Gregory that they should not be compelled to undertake so dangerous, toilsome, and uncertain a journey. The pope, in reply, sent them a hortatory epistle, persuading them to proceed in the work of the Divine word, and rely on the assistance of the Almighty. The purport of which letter was as follows:—

“Gregory, the servant of the servants of God, to the servants of our Lord. Forasmuch as it had been better not to begin a good work, than to think of desisting from that which has been begun, it behooves you, my beloved sons, to fulfill the good work, which, by the help of our Lord, you have undertaken. Let not, therefore, the toil of the journey, nor the tongues of evil-speaking men, deter you; but with all possible earnestness and zeal perform that which, by God's direction, you have undertaken; being assured that much

labor is followed by an eternal reward. When Augustine, your chief, returns, whom we also constitute your abbot, humbly obey him in all things; knowing that whatsoever you shall do by his direction, will in all respects be available to your souls. Almighty God protect you with his grace, and grant that I may, in the heavenly country, see the fruits of your labor. Inasmuch as, though I cannot labor with you, I shall partake in the joy of the reward, because I am willing to labor. God keep you in safety, my most beloved sons. Dated the 23rd of July, in the fourteenth year of the reign of our pious and most august lord, Mauritius Tiberius, the thirteenth year after the consulship of our said lord. The fourteenth indiction."

Book I, chap. 25

THE ENDEAVORS OF AUGUSTINE

Augustine, thus strengthened by the confirmation of the blessed Father Gregory, returned to the work of the word of God, with the servants of Christ, and arrived in Britain. The powerful Ethelbert was at that time king of Kent; he had extended his dominions as far as the great river Humber, by which the Southern Saxons are divided from the Northern. On the east of Kent is the large Isle of Thanet containing according to the English way of reckoning, 600 families, divided from the other land by the river Wantsum, which is about three furlongs over, and fordable only in two places, for both ends of it run into the sea. In this island landed the servant of our Lord, Augustine, and his companions, being, as is reported, nearly forty men. They had, by order of the blessed Pope Gregory, taken interpreters of the nation of the Franks, and sending

to Ethelbert, signified that they were come from Rome, and brought a joyful message, which most undoubtedly assured to all that took advantage of it everlasting joys in heaven, and a kingdom that would never end, with the living and true God. The king having heard this, ordered them to stay in that island where they had landed, and that they should be furnished with all necessaries, till he should consider what to do with them. For he had before neard of the Christian religion, having a Christian wife of the royal family of the Franks, called Bertha; whom he had received from her parents, upon condition that she should be permitted to practise her religion with the Bishop Luidhard, who was sent with her to preserve her faith. Some days after, the king came into the island, and sitting in the open air, ordered Augustine and his companions to be brought into his presence. For he had taken precaution that they should not come to him in any house, lest, according to an ancient superstition, if they practised any magical arts, they might impose upon him, and so get the better of him. But they came furnished with Divine, not with magic virtue, bearing a silver cross for their banner, and the image of our Lord and Savior painted on a board; and singing the litany, they offered up their prayers to the Lord for the eternal salvation both of themselves and of those to whom they were come. When he had sat down, pursuant to the king's commands, and preached to him and his attendants there present, the word of life, the king answered thus: "Your words and promises are very fair, but as they are new to us, and of uncertain import, I cannot approve of them so far as to forsake that which I have so long followed with the whole English nation. But because you are come from far into my kingdom, and, as I conceive, are desirous to impart to us those

things which you believe to be true, and most beneficial, we will not molest you, but give you favorable entertainment, and take care to supply you with your necessary sustenance; nor do we forbid you to preach and gain as many as you can to your religion. Accordingly he permitted them to reside in the city of Canterbury, which was the metropolis of all his dominions, and, pursuant to his promise, besides allowing them sustenance, did not refuse them liberty to preach. It is reported that, as they drew near to the city, after their manner, with the holy cross, and the image of our sovereign Lord and King, Jesus Christ, they, in concert, sung this litany: "We beseech thee, O Lord, in all thy mercy, that thy anger and wrath be turned away from this city, and from thy holy house, because we have sinned. Hallelujah."

Book I, chap. 26

As soon as they entered the dwelling-place assigned them, they began to imitate the course of life practised in the primitive church; applying themselves to frequent prayer, watching and fasting; preaching the word of life to as many as they could; despising all worldly things, as not belonging to them; receiving only their necessary food from those they taught; living themselves in all respects conformably to what they prescribed to others, and being always disposed to suffer any adversity, and even to die for that truth which they preached. In short, several believed and were baptized, admiring the simplicity of their innocent life, and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine. There was on the east side of the city, a church dedicated to the honor of St. Martin, built whilst the Romans were still in the island, wherein the queen, who, as has been said before, was a Christian,

used to pray. In this they first began to meet, to sing, to pray, to say mass, to preach, and to baptize, till the king, being converted to the faith, allowed them to preach openly, and build or repair churches in all places.

When he, among the rest, induced by the unspotted life of these holy men, and their delightful promises, which, by many miracles, they proved to be most certain, believed and was baptized, greater numbers began daily to flock together to hear the word, and, forsaking their heathen rites, to associate themselves, by believing, to the unity of the church of Christ. Their conversion the king so far encouraged as that he compelled none to embrace Christianity but only showed more affection to the believers, as to his fellow citizens in the heavenly kingdom. For he had learned from his instructors and leaders to salvation that the service of Christ ought to be voluntary, not by compulsion. Nor was it long before he gave his teachers a settled residence in his metropolis of Canterbury, with such possessions of different kinds as were necessary for their subsistence.

Book IV, chap. 24

CÆDMON

There was in this abbess's monastery a certain brother, particularly remarkable for the grace of God, who was wont to make pious and religious verses, so that whatever was interpreted to him out of Scripture, he soon after put the same into poetical expressions of much sweetness and humility, in English, which was his native language. By his verses the minds of many were often excited to despise the world, and to aspire to heaven. Others after him attempted, in the English nation, to

compose religious poems, but none could ever compare with him, for he did not learn the art of poetry from men, but from God; for which reason he never could compose any trivial or vain poem, but only those which relate to religion suited his religious tongue; for having lived in a secular habit till he was well advanced in years, he had never learned any thing of versifying; for which reason being sometimes at entertainments, when it was agreed for the sake of mirth that all present should sing in their turns, when he saw the instrument come towards him, he rose up from table and returned home.

Having done so at a certain time, and gone out of the house where the entertainment was, to the stable, where he had to take care of the horses that night, he there composed himself to rest at the proper time; a person appeared to him in his sleep, and saluting him by his name, said, "Cædmon, sing some song to me." He answered, "I cannot sing; for that was the reason why I left the entertainment, and retired to this place, because I could not sing." The other who talked to him, replied, "However, you shall sing."—"What shall I sing?" rejoined he. "Sing the beginning of created beings," said the other. Hereupon he presently began to sing verses to the praise of God, which he had never heard, the purport whereof was thus:—We are now to praise the Maker of the heavenly kingdom, the power of the Creator and his counsel, the deeds of the Father of glory. How he, being the eternal God, became the author of all miracles, who first, as almighty preserver of the human race, created heaven for the sons of men as the roof of the house, and next the earth. This is the sense, but not the words in order as he sang them in his sleep; for verses, though never so well composed, cannot be literally translated out of one language into

another, without losing much of their beauty and loftiness. Awakening from his sleep, he remembered all that he had sung in his dream; and soon added much more to the same effect in verse worthy of the Deity.

In the morning he came to the steward, his superior, and having acquainted him with the gift he had received, was conducted to the abbess, by whom he was ordered, in the presence of many learned men, to tell his dream, and repeat the verses, that they might all give their judgment what it was, and whence his verse proceeded. They all concluded that heavenly grace had been conferred on him by our Lord. They expounded to him a passage in Holy Writ, either historical, or doctrinal, ordering him, if he could, to put the same into verse. Having undertaken it, he went away, and returning the next morning, gave it to them composed in most excellent verse; whereupon the abbess, embracing the grace of God in the man, instructed him to quit the secular habit, and take upon him the monastic life; which being accordingly done, she associated him to the rest of the brethren in her monastery, and ordered that he should be taught the whole series of sacred history. Thus Cædmon, keeping in mind all he heard, and as it were chewing the cud, converted the same into most harmonious verse; and sweetly repeating the same made his masters in their turn his hearers. He sang the creation of the world, the origin of man, and all the history of Genesis: and made many verses on the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and their entering into the land of promise, with many other histories from Holy Writ; the incarnation, passion, resurrection of our Lord, and his ascension into heaven; the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the preaching of the apostles; also the terror of future judgment, the horror of the pains of hell, and the delights of heaven;

besides many more about the Divine benefits and judgments, by which he endeavored to turn away all men from the love of vice, and to excite in them the love of, and application to, good actions; for he was a very religious man humbly submissive to regular discipline, but full of zeal against those who behaved themselves otherwise; for which reason he ended his life happily.

For when the time of his departure drew near, he labored for the space of fourteen days under a bodily infirmity which seemed to prepare the way, yet so moderate that he could talk and walk the whole time. In his neighborhood was the house to which those that were sick, and like shortly to die, were carried. He desired the person that attended him, in the evening, as the night came on in which he was to depart this life, to make ready a place there for him to take his rest. This person, wondering why he should desire it, because there was as yet no sign of his dying soon, did what he had ordered. He accordingly went there, and conversing pleasantly in a joyful manner with the rest that were in the house before, when it was past midnight, he asked them whether they had the Eucharist there. They answered, "What need of the Eucharist? for you are not likely to die, since you talk so merrily with us, as if you were in perfect health."—"However," said he, "bring me the Eucharist." Having received the same into his hand, he asked whether they were all in charity with him, and without any enmity or rancor? They answered, that they were all in perfect charity, and free from anger; and in their turn asked him, whether he was in the same mind towards them? He answered, "I am in charity, my children, with all the servants of God." Then strengthening himself with the heavenly viaticum, he prepared for the entrance into another life, and asked how near

the time was when the brothers were to be awakened to sing the nocturnal praises of our Lord? They answered, "It is not far off." Then he said, "Well, let us wait that hour"; and signing himself with the sign of the cross, he laid his head on the pillow, and falling into a slumber, ended his life so in silence.

Thus it came to pass, that as he had served God with a simple and pure mind, and undisturbed devotion, so he now departed to His presence, leaving the world by a quiet death; and that tongue, which had composed so many holy words in praise of the Creator, uttered its last words whilst he was in the act of signing himself with the cross, and recommending himself into His hands, and by what has been here said, he seems to have had foreknowledge of his death.

CYNEWULF

(LATE EIGHTH CENTURY)

DOOMSDAY

(from *Christ*)

THEN in the midnight the great day of the Lord of might shall come with power unto mortal men, the radiant world, even as a crafty thief, a robber bold, who creepeth in the darkness, in the black night, and falleth suddenly on care-free men bound in slumber; evilly assaileth earls all unprepared.

So on Mount Sion shall gather a mighty host, faithful unto the Lord, bright and blithe; and unto them shall blessedness be given. Then from the four borders of the world, from the uttermost kingdom of earth, four radiant angels in accord shall blow upon the trumpet

in one great blast. Then shall the earth tremble, the ground under the foot of man. They shall sound together, steadfast, glorious, unto the path of the stars; they shall peal and send their voice south and north, east and west over all creation. They shall wake from death, out of the ancient earth, in terror, the sons of warriors, the race of man, unto the judgment. They shall bid arise out of firm slumber suddenly.

Then shall be heard a wailing folk, sorrowful in soul, bitterly disquieted, lamenting in woe the deeds of their days of life, trembling in terror. That shall be the greatest of portents, of all such as early or late have ever been revealed to man. There shall meet together the secret hosts of angels and of devils, the radiant and the dark. And both shall come, the white and black, according as a home is wrought for them, in different wise for angels and for fiends.

Then suddenly from out the south and east cometh upon Mount Sion, from the Lord, the radiance of the sun, gleaming more brightly than men may imagine it in their hearts, shining in splendor, when the Son of God, through the arching heavens, appeareth hither. Then cometh the wondrous presence of Christ, the beautiful radiance of the noble King, eastward from the skies, pleasant in spirit unto His own people, bitter unto the sinful, varied in wondrous measure, unto the blessed and unto the wretched unlike.

Unto the good shall He be gracious, winsome and fair to see unto that holy host, beautiful in joy, a gentle friend. Pleasing and blissful shall it be to well-loved men to see that radiant splendor, mild in pleasure, the coming of their Lord, the King of might, unto such as pleased Him well of old in heart, in their words and works. But unto evil men He shall be fearsome, terrible to see, unto the sinful, unto such as thither come

with transgressions all undone. That may be a warning of punishment to him that hath wise thought, so that he may be no whit afraid; for the terror of that presence he shall have no dread of heart when he beholdeth the Lord of all creation moving on with mighty wonders to judge the hosts. And round about him on either hand fly thronging angel-troops, a band of radiant beings, hosts of the holy, in ample train.

Then shall resound the vast creation, and before the Lord there shall go forth the mightiest of surging fires over the wide earth; the hot flame shall leap. Then shall the heavens crash, the steadfast stars and radiant shall fall. The sun shall be turned dark unto the hue of blood, which gleamed so brightly over the ancient world unto the sons of men. The very moon, that in the night of old shed her light on men, shall sink from her station; so also shall the stars fade from heaven, through the fierce air, smitten with storms.

And the Almighty with His angel-throng, the Lord of mighty kings, the glorious Prince will come unto the assemblage. There shall be an exultant throng of thanes. Holy souls shall fare forth with their Lord, what time the Warden of peoples, with menace of terror, shall Himself seek out the tribes of earth. Then loud shall be heard throughout the spacious earth the noise of the trumpets of heaven, and on the seven sides the winds shall roar, shall blow, howling in mightiest tumult. They shall wake and wither the earth with tempest, filling the world with their breath. Then shall be heard a heavy crash, loud and measureless, deafening, violent, mightiest of thunders, terrible to men.

The weary hosts of men in multitudes shall depart into the wide flame, where a destroying fire shall come upon them still alive, some up, some down, smitten of the flame. Sure is it that then, all fulfilled of care,

the race of Adam shall wail in sore affliction; nor for little cause, these woeful tribes, but for the greatest of heavy hardships, when in one embrace the wan surge of fire, the dusky flame, far and wide shall seize on all three together, the seas with their fish, the earth and her hills, and the heaven above with all its stars. Fierce and furious the consuming flame shall burn all three. And all the world shall wail in woe in that dread hour.

So shall the greedy spirit run through earth, the destroying flame through high-built halls. The wide-known blast of fire, hot and devouring, shall fill the plain of earth, the very world with the terror of its flame. Broken city-walls shall fall together, mountains shall melt and lofty cliffs, that shielded earth of old against the sea, firm against the floods, secure and steadfast, barriers against the waves, the rolling surge. Then on every creature, on bird and beast, that fire of death shall seize, and over earth shall fare the dusky flame, a raging warrior. As of old waters flowed, the driving seas, then in that bath of fire the sea fish shall burn, sundered from the deep. All forspent each monster of the sea shall be consumed, water shall burn as wax.

Then shall be more of marvels than any may imagine in his heart, when the whirlwind and the storm and the fierce air shall rend the broad creation. Men shall mourn, sorrowing with tears and woeful voices, downcast and sad of soul, distressed with sorrow. The dusky flame shall blaze on those undone by sin, and fire shall devour golden jewels, the olden treasure of the kings of the land. Then in the thunder of heaven there shall be tumult and woe, strife of the living, lament, loud wailing, the pitiful plaint of men. Then may not any stained with sin win peace, or ever on earth escape away from that burning. But the fire shall take all

things in the world, shall burrow grimly, eagerly search out all the folds of earth within and without, till that the heat of its flame hath burned away all the stain of the sin of the world in its billowing surge.

Then shall mighty God come unto that glorious mount with the greatest of angel-bands, the King of heaven's angels shining in holiness, resplendent above His train: the all-wielding God. And round about Him shall gleam in glory the best of noble hosts, holy armies, the blessed angel-throng. Troubled in their innermost thoughts they shall tremble in the fear of God, the Father. No marvel is it if the impure race of mortal men, sorrowing in care, have heavy dread when this holy order, white and heavenly bright, the Spirit-host, are smitten with terror before His presence, when these bright creatures await with trembling the judgment of the Lord. Direst of days shall that be in the world, when the King of Glory in majesty chasteneth every people; biddeth mortal men dowered with speech rise up from out the graves of earth; biddeth the nations come to judgment, all mankind.

Then straight shall all the race of Adam put on flesh; they shall be at an end of their tarrying, their rest in the earth. At the coming of Christ shall each one rise to life, put on limbs and body, grow young again. He shall have upon him all of good or evil that in days of yore upon earth he garnered into his soul as years passed by. He shall have both together, body and soul. And then shall come to light before the King of heaven the form of his works and the memory of his words, and the musing of his heart.

Mankind shall be enlarged and renewed by the Creator; a mighty host shall rise to judgment when the Lord of life looseth the bonds of death. Then shall the air be kindled, the heavenly stars shall fall; widely

the greedy flame shall pillage. Spirits shall turn away unto their long home. For the deeds of men shall be known on earth, nor may they at all dissemble before their Lord the hoard of their hearts, their secret thoughts. No deeds are dark to Him, but God shall know on that great day how each one of men hath deserved eternal life, and all that early or late they wrought in the world shall come to light. Nor shall any of the musings of men be secret, but that great day will reveal the hoard of the casket of the soul, all the thoughts of the heart. Wherefore he should early be mindful of his spirit's need, whoso would bring a beauteous aspect unto God, when the hot, consuming fire testeth in the presence of the Victor-Judge how souls are held against the storms of sin.

Then the sound of the trump and the gleaming standard, the burning flame and the heavenly host, the angel-band and the menace of terror, the day of wrath and the lofty cross, lifted on high for a sign of sway, shall muster before Him all the multitudes of men, every soul of those that early or late put on limbs in the flesh. Then this mighty host shall pass before the Lord, forever living and ever young, with desire and heavy need. Named by name they shall bear the hoard of their hearts, the treasure of their souls, before the Son of God. Then will the Father know how His children bring their souls unmarred from that land wherein they dwelt. They shall be of good courage who bring a radiant beauty unto God. Their might and joy shall be exceeding full to recompense their souls, reward their works. Well is it with them that in that awful hour find grace with God.

Then shall sin-stained men with woe of heart for their lot behold the greatest of sorrows. Nor shall it bring them grace that there, present before all peoples,

standeth the cross of our Lord, brightest of beacons, with the blood of the King of heaven all bedewed, drenched with His pure blood. And it shineth resplendent over the wide creation. Shadows shall be dispelled where that radiant tree casteth its light on men. Yet shall it become an affliction, a woe unto the nations, unto all such as working iniquity knew no thanks to God, for that He was hung upon the holy tree for the sins of men. There for mankind with love He purchased life, He, the Prince, on that day with the ransom—His body, which had wrought no evil, no transgression nor sin—wherewith He set us free. Yet will He sternly take recompense again for all, when the red cross shineth over all the heavens in the place of the sun.

And the timid, undone in transgression, swart workers of sin, shall behold it in sorrow. They shall see it as a bale, which came best of all things unto them, had they but known it as good. Ruefully they shall see the former wounds upon their Lord, and the open gashes where plotters of hatred pierced with nails the white hands and the holy feet; yea! from His side let blood, and water and blood come forth together in the sight of all, ran out before the eyes of men, when He was on the cross. All this then may they see, open and clear, that for the love of sinful men He suffered many sorrows. Truly may the sons of men perceive how they denied Him in their lying hearts, flouted Him with words of insolence, spat their spittle in His face, deriding Him. With their hands hell-destined men struck that blessed face with outstretched palm and fist, and round about His head they bound a bitter crown of thorns, blind in heart, strayed and erring men.

They saw the dumb creation, the radiant-green earth and upper sky, with trembling feel its Savior's agonies; and though they lived not, woefully they wailed when

men of evil seized upon their Maker with sinful hands. The sun was darkened, veiled in sorrow, and in Jerusalem men saw the best of goodly webs, whereon the multitude had gazed of old, the glory of that holy house, rent from above so that in two halves it lay upon the earth. The temple-veil, wrought with wondrous color to be the beauty of that house, was cleft in twain even as though a keen sword-edge had pierced it through. Many walls and rocks throughout the world were burst asunder; also the earth, shaken with terror, trembled in tumult. The broad sea made known the strength of its might, and from its bonds in wrath broke forth unto the lap of earth; and from their shining stations the stars forsook their splendor sweet. In that same hour heaven clearly knew who decked it brightly with its starry gems; wherefore it sent its herald when first was born the radiant King of all the world. Lo! sinful men saw truly, on that very day whereon He suffered, a mighty wonder, when earth gave up all those who lay within. Quickened they rose to life whom she of old had firm constrained, the dead and buried, who held within their hearts the Lord's behests. And Hell perceived, she who avenges sin, that the Creator, the all-wielding God, was come, when she gave that horde the hosts from out her burning bosom.

Then was blessing come to many a heart, and from their souls sorrow stole away. Yea! the sea made known who stablished it upon the spacious earth, the mighty King of glory. Wherefore it yielded Him a way when God would walk upon the waves, nor dared the ocean-stream to cover with its flood the feet of God. And many a tree, no little number, revealed who shaped them with their blossoms, when mighty God mounted on one of them, whereon He knew affliction for the need of human kind, a baleful death to succor men.

Then many a tree wept bloody tears under its bark, ruddy, abundant tears; the sap was turned to blood. Nor may the dwellers of the world unriddle that, by craft of wisdom, how many lifeless things, that might not feel, still knew the Passion of our Lord. They that are the noblest of the tribes of earth, and eke the heaven's high halls, for that alone grew sorrowful and smitten with fear. For though by nature they had no understanding hearts, yet wondrously they weened it when the Lord departed from the flesh.

But the tribes of men, blind of heart, harder than stones of flint, knew not to confess their God that the Prince, the Lord Almighty, delivered them from the torments of Hell, by His holy might, and that from the first beginnings of the world far-seeing men, prophets of the Lord, holy and sage of heart, with searching wisdom, full oft nor once alone spake to the sons of men anent that noble Son that, through the holy maid, the Precious Stone, the Lord of glory, Prince of bliss, would become a refuge and a comfort unto human kind.

What weeneth he who is not mindful in his heart of the gentle teachings of his Lord, and of all the sorrows that He suffered for the sons of men, since He was fain that we might have for ever a heavenly home. In the grim day of the great doom it shall go sadly with that man who, all defiled by deadly sin, gazeth on the gashes of the Lord, his wounds and woe. With weary hearts they shall behold that greatest of sorrows, how with His body, with pitying heart, the King himself redeemed them from their sin, that they might live set free from their transgressions and have the everlasting blessedness of glory. But for that gift they knew no thanks unto their Lord; wherefore in God shall they behold the token of their woeful lot, manifest, boding ill.

Then Christ shall sit upon His royal throne, on His high judgment-seat; the God of heaven's hosts, the Almighty Father, the Shining Lord, the Sovereign of the skies, shall adjudge unto every folk rightfully according to the things they have wrought. On the right hand shall be mustered the multitude of the pure, chosen unto Christ Himself for all that is choicest, for that they eagerly fulfilled His words in the days of their life. And the workers of sin shall be sundered unto a harder lot before their Lord. The true King of victory shall bid that sinful horde on the left hand depart. Then detected they shall wail and tremble in terror before God. As foul as goats, an unclean folk, they may not hope for mercy. Thus before God shall the soul's judgment be decreed unto the generations of men according to the things that formerly they wrought.

There among the blessed, easily to be discerned, shall be three tokens that they have heeded well their Master's will in their words and works. The first clear token is that they gleam with light before the peoples, with glory and splendor through the dwellings of the cities. And on them shine the works that formerly they wrought, on every one of them, more radiant than the sun.

And a second token shall be shown that they in glory know the grace of God, beholding with enraptured eyes that in the heavenly kingdom they may know bright joys in blessedness among the angels. And the third token shall be that the blessed hosts may see how those undone by sin suffer sorely in requital of their transgression—the raging flame and the sting of serpents with bitter jaws, a host of burning souls. And in their heart waxeth a winsome joy. When they see others suffer that evil which by God's mercy they escaped, then the more eagerly do they give thanks to God for blessedness and bliss—they who see that He redeemed them

from that evil torment and granted them eternal joy. For them is Hell fast locked and the Kingdom of Heaven yielded up. So shall recompense be given them who heeded well in love their Maker's will.

But to those others shall unlike decree go forth. Full too many a woe must they behold upon themselves, abundant evil, suffering for transgressions done. Unto them sorrowing cleaveth sore distress, a grievous wide-spread evil on three sides. And of those many miseries whereon they gaze one shall be the dreadful fire of Hell before them, prepared in punishment, wherein forever they must strive and suffer curse and exile.

Likewise there shall be a second misery to the shame of guilty men that they, by sin defiled, must needs endure most deep disgrace. In them the Lord beholdeth no small toll of loathsome sins; likewise the radiant throng of heavenly angels and the sons of men, all they that dwell on earth and the grim fiend shall know their dark craft and every deed of evil. Through the flesh may they behold the stains of vice upon the soul. The sinful flesh shall be shot through with shame as a bright glass, that men most easily may gaze it through. And in their heavy need a third sorrow, a wailing woe, shall be that they behold how guiltless men in gladness rejoice in their good deeds, which they, unhappy men, disdained to do while yet their days endured. And for their deeds shall come distress and weeping, that formerly so freely they accomplished sin.

They shall see better men shining in bliss, nor shall their misery only be a torment unto them, but the blessedness of those others shall be a sorrow, that they in former days passed by so fair and winsome joy through the deceitful pleasures of the body, the idle lust of sinful flesh. Then confounded, smit with shame, they shall stray dizzily, bearing their sinful burden, their deeds

of guilt which all that folk doth see. Then were it better for them had they humbled them before one man aforetime for their works of sin, every iniquity and wrongful act, and to God's messenger confessed that to their shame they knew their deeds of evil. Neither may he that shriveth see through the flesh upon the soul whether one speaketh truth or lying words when he confesseth sin. Yet man may heal his every evil and unclean act if he but tell it to one single man. And none may hide on that grim day an evil unatoned; but then the host shall see it. Yea! with the body's eyes shall we behold upon our souls hateful transgressions, the wounds of sin, impure meditations, musings of ill. Nor may any man tell it to another with what eagerness each one of us by every act is fain in striving after life, anxiously endeavoring after days of living, to purge away the rust of sin to chasten self, to heal the scars of former wounds, what little time of life remaineth, that pure and undismayed before the eyes of them that dwell on earth he may enjoy his heritage with men so long as soul and body live together.

But with the heart's eyes should we eagerly and wisely gaze through the soul's casing to the sins within. For with those other eyes, the jewels of the head, in no wise may we penetrate the spirit of the secret thought, whether below it evil dwell or good, that it may be pleasing unto God in that dread hour.

Then in glory He shall shine above all hosts, in radiant flame from His high seat, where before angels and all the tribes of men He first shall speak to the most blessed, with loving kindness grant them grace in holy words. The High-King of heaven shall show them gentle comfort and bring them peace. He shall bid them, free of stain, and full of blessing, depart unto

the land of the joy of angels, and ever gladsomely enjoy it.

“Now with friends receive ye the Kingdom of My Father, that was prepared for you in winsomeness before all worlds, blessedness with bliss, bright beauty of home, where ye with well-loved men may see true weal of life, sweet heavenly joy. This have ye merited since joyfully ye received with gracious heart wretched men, the needy of the world; when in My name they humbly craved your pity then did ye grant them help and shelter, unto the hungry bread, clothes to the naked, and those that lay diseased in pain, enthralled of sickness, their souls ye softly stayed with love of heart. All that ye did unto Me what time ye sought them out with kindly love, ever strengthening their souls with comfort. Wherefore in blessedness with My beloved long shall ye reap reward.”

Then shall all-wielding God in the menace of terror begin to speak unto the evil, unto those on His left hand in unlike wise. They may not look for mercy from the Lord, nor life nor pity, but there a reward shall come unto all men, unto all with speech endowed, according to their acts of word and deed. They shall suffer a righteous doom full of terror. And on that day the great mercy of the Almighty Lord shall be cut off from all the tribes of men when wrathfully He imputeth to that folk perverse their sinful deeds; in words of anger biddeth them make accounting of their life which formerly He gave for blessedness unto so wicked men. Almighty God shall begin to speak as He were speaking to one only man, yet shall He mean all sinful folk.

“Lo! man! with my hand I wrought thee first, gave thee reason, shaped thy limbs of clay, yea! and breathed a living spirit in thee. Over all created things I honored thee. I gave thee form and aspect like to Me;

granted thee fulness of might, weal over all wide lands. No deal of woe thou knewest for thy portion, nor of the darkness thou must now endure. Yet knewest thou no thanks that I shaped thee in beauty, wrought thee winsome, granted thee wealth of riches that thou mightest wield it over the things of the world, where I set thee on the fair earth that thou mightest enjoy the bright profusion of Paradise, radiant of hue. Thou wouldest not keep the word of life, but broke My bidding at thy Bane's behest, hearkening rather unto scathing spoilers than to the Lord that made thee.

"Now I pass by that ancient tale how thou in the beginning wroughtest evil, squandering in deeds of sin that I gave thee as profit. That I gave to thee abundantly of good and in it all there seemed unto thy heart too little of felicity, if thou mightest not have fulness of might of like greatness with God's, therefore thou grewest estranged from that delight, cast out afar after the will of thy foes. The beauty of Paradise, the home of spirits, thou must needs forego, sorrowful in soul, wicked and wretched, shorn of all thy bounty and blessedness. Then wast thou driven out into the gloomy world to undergo heavy affliction all this weary while, pain and toilsome strife and darksome death, and on thy going hence must needs in Hell abjectly perish, bereft of helping hands. Then was I rueful that My handiwork should fare forth into fiends' dominion, that the sons of men should know destruction, make trial of a dwelling all unknown, and grievous fortune.

"Then I Myself descended as a son unto his mother; yet was her maidenhood inviolate of man. I only was born a comfort unto men; and with their hands men swathed Me, clad Me in weeds of the needy, and laid Me in darkness wrapped in swarthy raiment. Lo! that have I endured for the world. Little I seemed

unto the children of men. I lay on the hard stone, an infant in a manger, that I might save thee from torment, and the burning bale of Hell. That misery I suffered that thou mightest shine holy and blessed in eternal life.

“No pride it was to Me; but I suffered in My youth misery and shameless pain of body that I might be like thee, and that thou, purged of sin, mightest grow like to My winsome beauty. And for My love of man My face and head have suffered, enduring grievous blows. Oft on My face I received the spittle of sinners, from the mouths of graceless men. Bitterly they blended unto Me an unsweet drink of vinegar and gall. There before that folk I suffered the hatred of hostile men; they afflicted Me with outrage, shrank not from enmity, with scourges scourged Me. That misery in meekness all for thee I suffered, insult and reviling word. About My head they wreathed a wounding crown, heavily pressed it home, all wrought of thorns. Then was I hung upon the lofty rood, fastened upon the cross. And straight with spear from out My side they let My blood flow forth, My gore into the ground, that thou thereby mightest be freed from the dominion of devils. So, unstained of sin, I suffered torment, evil affliction, till I sent forth alone from out its house of flesh My living spirit. Behold the deadly wounds they wrought of old upon My hands and feet, whereby made fast I hung in agony. Still mayest thou behold clearly in My side the bloody gash. How is the account unequal ’twixt us twain! I bore thy suffering that in blessedness thou mightest happily enjoy My native kingdom; for thee I purchased dearly by My death long life that thenceforth in the light, unstained of sin, thou mightest dwell in beauty. My body, which wrought no harm to any, lay enfolded in the earth, buried in the sepulchre

below, that thou mightest be on high brightly exalted 'mid the host of heaven. Why didst thou forsake that shining life that with My body I kindly bought in love for thee, a succor unto wretched men? Surely thou wast void of understanding that thou knewest not thanks to God for thy redemption. I ask nought for that bitter death I suffered for thee. Yield Me thy life; that life for which I gave Mine own in ransom, in martyrdom, that life I now demand, which thou hast slain with evil to thy shame. The holy temple which I had hallowed in thee, a house of joy—why hast thou fouled it of thine own self-will in lust of sin and filthy deed?

“Yea! the very body that I redeemed from out the clutch of fiends, forbade it sin, working thy wickedness, thou hast stained with shames. Why didst thou hang Me on a cross of thy hand's making in greater agony than I hung of old? Lo! this to Me the harder seemeth. Severer unto Me thy cross of sins whereon I am reluctant hung, than was that other cross whereon I mounted up of Mine own will, when urgently thy woe repented Me in heart, when forth from Hell I drew thee, where thenceforth thou wast fain to dwell. In the world was I poor that in heaven thou mightest have wealth; wretched was I in thy kingdom that thou mightest have bliss in Mine. Yet for all in thy heart thou knewest no thanks unto thy Savior-God. Lo! I gave you bidding to cherish well My brothers in the world, with all the goods I gave you on the earth to help the poor; ye have fulfilled it ill. Ye have denied the needy to enter in under your roof, refused them everything with stony heart, clothes unto the naked, meat unto those anhungered, though in My name weary, in sickness, they besought for water, bountiless, plagued of thirst, distressed for drink. Roughly ye refused;

the sorrowful ye visited not, spake unto them no gentle word of comfort, that they might gain a better cheer. All this ye did to Me, unto the scorn of the King of heaven. Wherefore ye shall suffer grievous, endless torment, endure exile with fiends."

Then over all the Warden of victory shall issue an awful sentence, abounding in pain, over that fated folk. He shall say to that band of sinful souls:

"Fare ye now accursed, by your own wills bereft of angel's joy, unto eternal fire, hot and grim, that was prepared of old for Satan and his fellows, the Fiend and his dark host. Ye shall sink therein."

Shorn of counsel they may not scorn the sentence of the King of heaven, but swiftly they shall sink into the deep pit, into the dusky flame the host of the sinful, spirits doomed under the folds of earth, unto the dwelling of fiends the horde of the guilty, to destruction the cursed, unto the house of torment, death hall of the devil. Never again shall they seek remembrance of God, nor escape out of their sins, but stained of evil, bound in burning flame they shall suffer death. Ever vengeance for their sins shall be upon them, that is eternal torment. Nor may that flaming pit ever in the eternal night burn away sin from the sons of men, pollution from their souls forever. But ever the deep abyss feedeth those wretched souls; bottomless it holdeth spirits in the darkness, consumeth them with ancient flame and chilling terror, with serpents dire and many a torment, with bitter jaws it scatheth all that folk.

Of that may we have heed, declaring straightway, telling truly that the warden of the soul hath lost life's wisdom, he who regardeth not whether his soul know misery or bliss, where, after his going hence, he shall dwell forever. He feareth not to work his wickedness, rash-hearted man, nor any whit hath he of rue in heart,

that the Holy Ghost depart away from him by reason of his sins in this fleeting life. Then the worker of evil, trembling before God, shall stand black-hearted at the judgment, stained with death, accursed with his sins. The faithless shall be filled with fire, unworthy of life, smitten of dread before the face of God. Dusky, devoid of beauty, he shall have the hue of the damned, a sign of the guilt of the soul. Then when there is no time the sons of men shall weep their tears and wail for their transgressions. Too late they shall do to the comfort of their souls, when the Lord of hosts will not regard how sinful men bewail in bitterness their olden treasure in that revealing hour. Nor shall any time of sorrow be vouchsafed to men, that he, who will not win his soul's salvation, while still he dwelleth here on earth, may then find healing. On no good man shall woe be visited, nor weal on any evil, but every wight shall bear his works alone.

Wherefore he who would fain win life at his Creator's hand must haste while soul and body dwell together. Let him cherish eagerly the beauty of his soul after the will of God, be heedful of his words and deeds, his bearing and his inward thoughts, so long as this world gliding in the shadow may shine for him, that in this fleeting hour he lose not the bounty of his joy, his toll of days, and comely deeds, and his reward of glory that the King of heaven in that holy hour justly granteth, as guerdon of their triumph, unto all such as hearken unto Him with eager hearts.

Then heaven and hell shall be filled with the children of heroes, the souls of men. The gulf shall swallow up God's enemies; the hurtling flame shall seize on wicked men, mortal transgressors, neither allow them thence to flee away with joy to any refuge. But fire shall bind the fast imprisoned horde and scourge the

children of sin. Insolent to me it seemieth that men endowed with spirit will not heed in their hearts what the Ruler layeth on them in His vengeance, upon hostile men. Then life and death shall take their fill of souls; the house of torment shall be open and revealed to faithless men. Men swift to sin shall fill it with their blackened souls. Then to avenge their guilt the wicked horde shall be sundered, the cursed from the holy, unto destroying pain. There shall thieves and spoilers and liars and adulterers have no hope of life; and perjurers shall know the guerdon of sin, bitter and terrible. Then shall hell take in the host of the faithless and God shall give them over to destruction unto fiends. The damned shall suffer grievous mortal bale. Wretched shall be that man who willeth to work transgression so that in his sin he shall be sundered from the Lord at the day of doom to death below, among the race of hell, in that burning fire, under locks of flame. There shall they yield their limbs to be bound, to be burned, to be scourged in vengeance of sin.

Then at the word of the King, by the might of God, shall the Holy Spirit fasten the locks of hell, that greatest of torture-houses, filled with fire and the horde of fiends. Direst of deaths shall that be of devils and of men. That is a joyless house. Thence may not any ever flee away from out his icy bonds. They broke the King's behest, the bright commandments of the Books. Wherefore they must dwell in everlasting darkness, endure an endless woe forever, stained with sin, they who scorned on earth the glory of the heavenly kingdom.

Then the chosen shall bear before Christ bright treasure, and joy shall live upon the day of doom. They shall know the blessedness of peaceful life with God, which shall be given unto all saints within the heavenly

realm. That land shall never come unto an end, but there forevermore, all free of sin, they shall know bliss, praise the Lord of hosts, dear Savior of their life, all wreathed in light, enwrapped in peace, safe from sorrows, glorified with joy, loved of the Lord. Always in bliss forever they shall know the fellowship of angels, and radiant in grace adore the Lord of men. The Father of all hath power and upholdeth the host of the holy. There is the song of angels, the bliss of the blessed; there is the Lord's dear face more radiant than the sun unto all happy souls. There is life without death, a gladsome band of men; youth without age, the glory of the hosts of heaven; health without pangs unto the righteous; rest without toil, the lot of the blessed; day without darkness, bright and filled with glory; bliss without sorrow; love between friends forever without discord; peace without strife for blessed souls in heaven in the company of holy men. There shall be no hunger nor thirst, neither sleep nor heavy sickness, nor burning of the sun, nor cold, nor care. But that blessed band, fairest of hosts, shall know the favor of their King forever and glory with the Lord.

THE DREAM OF THE ROOD

Lo, I will tell the choicest dream,
That came to me in the middle of night
When speaking men were deep in rest.
It seemed that I saw a marvellous tree
Move in the air enwrapped in light,
Brightest of beams. All that beacon was
Wound round with gold; the gems stood
Fair above earth's face, and five there were
Upon the cross-span. All the angels of the Lord beheld
it there,

Fair through creation: no wretch's gallows-tree was that,
But holy spirits watched it there,
Men above earth and all that bright creation.

Bright was the victory-beam, and I was stained with
sin,

Wounded with evil. I saw the tree of heaven,
Wrapped round with vestments, shine with joy,
Geared with gold; gems had worthily
Encrusted the tree of the Ruler;
Yet through the gold I might perceive
The scar of ancient combat when long ago it began
To sweat on the right side. I was with sorrow
troubled; 20

I was afraid of that fair sight. I saw that vivid beam
Alter in vesture and hue; now it was wet with blood,
Soiled with the course of sweat, and now it was geared
with jewels.

Yet there I lay for a long while
And watched the sorrowful tree of the Savior,
Until I heard it utter speech;
The best of woods began to say these words:

"That was long, long ago—but I remember still—
When I was hew'n down at the forest's edge,
Cut from my trunk. Strong foes laid hold on me, 30
Made them a spectacle, bade me lift their felons high;
Men bore me on their shoulders till they set me on a
hill,

Many foes made me fast there.

I saw the Lord of mankind
Hasten with courage great to mount on me.
Then I durst not, 'gainst the Almighty's word,
Bend or break, even though I saw
The face of the earth tremble; all those foes
I might have felled, but I stood fast.

The young Savior stripped him then—He that was
God Almighty— 40
Strong and stout-hearted; he climbed the high gallows-
tree

Brave in the eyes of many, when He would save man-
kind.

I trembled when the Man embraced me; yet I dared not
bow to earth,
Fall to the face of the ground—I must stand fast.

I was raised a cross; I lifted high the mighty King,
The Lord of heaven; bow down I dared not.

They pierced me through with dark nails; the scars
can yet be seen,
Open wounds of hate; yet dared I not scathe any of
them.

They mocked us both together. I was all dewed with
blood

That came from the Man's side when He sent forth his
ghost. 50

Much I endured upon that hill
Of cruel fate; I saw the God of hosts
Stretched on a cross; darkness had
Covered with clouds the body of the Lord,
The bright glory; a shadow went forth,
Wan under the clouds. All creation wept,
Spoke of the King's fall; Christ was on the cross.

But eager ones came from afar
To the Ætheling; I beheld all that.
I was sore distressed with sorrow, but I bowed to the
hands of the men, 60
Humble with great zeal. Then they took Almighty
God,
Lifted Him from that bitter torment; the warriors left
me there

To stand bedewed with blood; I was wounded with
arrows.

They laid Him there, limb-weary, stood at His body's
head;

There they looked on the Lord of heaven; and He rested
there awhile,

Tired from that great battle. Then they built for him
a tomb,

Men in the sight of His slayers; they carved it out of
shining stone,

And laid therein the Lord of victories. They raised
their dirge for Him,

Sad in the eventide, when they must depart,

Weary, from their great lord; there He stayed, alone. 70

Dripping there, a goodly while

We stood in our stations, after the wail of the warriors
arose.

The body grew cold, the soul's fair dwelling-place.

Then men began to fell us

All to earth—that was a grisly fate!

They buried us deep in a pit. But the thanes of the
Lord,

Friends, found me; (they raised me up from earth),
Geared me with gold and silver.

Now hast thou heard, man dear to me,

How I withstood the work of evil men,

80

Sore sorrow. Now the time is come

That in my worship wide and far

Men on the earth, and all the bright creation

Kneel to this beacon. On me the Son of God

Once suffered; wherefor in glory now

I tower under heaven, and I may save

Any of them that are in awe of me.

Hardest of tortures long ago was I,

To men most hateful, till I showed to them

The rightful way of life. Lo, the Lord of glory 90
Honored me above all trees of the wood, He, the Lord
of heaven,

Just as He, Almighty God, set his mother, Mary's self,
Over all womankind.

Now do I bid thee, hero beloved,
That thou shalt tell this dream to men:
Proclaim in words it is the tree of glory
On which Almighty God once suffered
For mankind's many sins
And Adam's deed of old.

Death there He tasted; but the Lord rose again 100
With his great might to help mankind.

He ascended into heaven; here He shall come again
Into this world to seek mankind,

The Lord Himself on the day of doom,
Almighty God and His angels with Him.

And He will judge, that has the power of judgment,
Each one by his deserts, earlier here

Earned in this fleeting life.

No man may then be unafraid

Because of the word that the Lord will say: 110

He will ask of the many where the man may be
Who for the Lord's name bitter death would taste

As He did once upon the tree;

But they will be afraid, and scarcely know

What they shall say to Christ.

There need not then be any man afraid

Who bears in his breast this brightest beacon,

But through the Rood shall seek the kingdom

From the ways of earth, each soul

That hopes to dwell with the Lord." 120

Then, blithe-hearted, I prayed to that tree,
With fervent zeal, there where I was alone,
Without companion; and my soul

Was eager for its journey; long had it waited,
A long, weary time. Now is it my life's hope
That I may seek the victory-beam, alone,
More often than all other men worthily worship it;
My desire for this is great within my heart, and my
help

Comes from the cross. I have not many
Powerful friends on earth, but they have hence de-
parted, 130

Gone from the joy of the world to seek the King of
glory;

Now live they in heaven with the High-Father,
They dwell in glory; and I look each day
For the cross of the Lord that I saw here on earth
To take me from this fleeting life

And bring me where there is great bliss,
Joy in heaven, where the folk of the Lord
Sit at the feast, where is joy everlasting;
And there it will set me where I may thereafter
Dwell in glory, well share in the joy of the saints. 140
May the Lord be my friend, He who here on earth
suffered

For the sins of men on the gallows-tree;
He brought us salvation, and gave to us life,
A home in the heavens.

Hope came again

With blessing and bliss to the sufferers in flames.
The Son was triumphant upon that journey,
Successful and mighty, He came with a throng,
A host of spirits into God's kingdom,
Ruler almighty—to the joy of the angels, 150
And all those saints who already in heaven
Were dwelling in glory, when their Ruler came,
When Almighty God came to His home.

(8th century?)

THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE

A.D. 1. Octavianus reigned fifty-six years; and in the forty-second year of his reign Christ was born.

A.D. 2. The three astrologers came from the eastern parts in order that they might worship Christ. And the children were slain at Bethlehem, in persecution of Christ by Herod.

A.D. 3. This year died Herod, having stabbed himself, and Archelaus, his son, succeeded to the government. And the child Christ was brought back again from Egypt.

A.D. 4. 5.

A.D. 6. From the beginning of the world to this year, five thousand and two hundred years were gone by.

A.D. 7-10.

A.D. 11. This year Herod, the son of Antipater, obtained the government of Judea.

A.D. 12. Philip and Herod divided Lysia (between them), and Judea they divided into tetrarchies.

A.D. 12. This year Judea was divided into four tetrarchies.

A.D. 13-15.

A.D. 16. This year Tiberius succeeded to the empire.

A.D. 17-25.

A.D. 26. This year Pilate began to rule over the Jews.

A.D. 27-29.

A.D. 30. This year Christ was baptized; and he converted Peter and Andrew, and James and John and Philip, and the twelve apostles.

A.D. 31. 32.

A.D. 33. This year Christ was crucified; being from

the beginning of the world about five thousand two hundred and twenty-six years.

A.D. 30. This year St. Paul was converted, and St. Stephen stoned.

A.D. 35. This year the blessed apostle Peter established a bishop's see in the city of Antioch.

A.D. 36. 37.

A.D. 38. This year Pilate slew himself with his own hand.

A.D. 39. This year Caius obtained the empire.

A.D. 40. Matthew, in Judea, began to write his gospel.

A.D. 41-44.

A.D. 45. This year the blessed apostle Peter established a bishop's see in Rome. This year James, the brother of John, was slain by Herod.

A.D. 46. This year Herod died; he who slew James, one year before his own death.

A.D. 46. This year the emperor Claudius came to Britain, and subdued a large part of the island; and he also added the island of Orkney to the dominion of the Romans.

A.D. 47. This year Claudius, second of the Roman kings, sought the land of Britain, and brought under his power the greater part of the island, and also subjected the Orkney Islands to the dominion of the Romans. This war he effected in the fourth year of his reign; and in the same year was the great famine in Syria, which was foretold in the Acts of the Apostles through Agabus the prophet. Then Nero succeeded to the empire after Claudius: he nearly lost the island of Britain through his cowardice. Mark the Evangelist begins to write the gospel in Egypt.

A.D. 448. This year John the Baptist revealed his head to two monks who came from the east to offer up

their prayers at Jerusalem, on the spot which was formerly Herod's residence.

A.D. 449. This year Martianus and Valentinus succeeded to the empire, and reigned seven years. And in their days Hengist and Horsa, invited by Vortigern king of the Britons, landed in Britain on the shore which is called Wippidsfleet; at first in aid of the Britons, but afterwards they fought against them. King Vortigern gave them land in the south-east of this country, on condition that they should fight against the Picts. Then they fought against the Picts and had the victory wheresoever they came. They then sent to the Angles; desired a larger force to be sent, and caused them to be told the worthlessness of the Britons, and the excellencies of the land. Then they soon sent thither a larger force in aid of the others. At that time there came men from three tribes in Germany; from the Old Saxons, from the Angles, from the Jutes. From the Jutes came the Kentishmen and the Wightwarrians, that is, the tribe which now dwells in Wight, and that race among the West Saxons which is still called the race of Jutes. From the Old Saxons came the men of Essex and Sussex and Wessex. From Anglia, which has ever since remained waste betwixt the Jutes and Saxons, came the men of East Anglia, Middle Anglia, Mercia, and all Northumbria. Their leaders were brothers, Hengist and Horsa: they were the sons of Wihtgils; Wihtgils son of Witta, Witta of Wecta, Wecta of Woden: from this Woden sprang all our royal families, and those of the Southumbrians also.

A.D. 565. This year Ethelbert succeeded to the kingdom of the Kentishmen, and held it fifty-three years. In his days the holy pope Gregory sent us baptism, that was in the two and thirtieth year of his reign: and

Columba, a mass-priest, came to the Picts, and converted them to the faith of Christ; they are dwellers by the northern mountains. And their king gave him the island which is called Ii (Iona): therein are five hides of land, as men say. There Columba built a monastery, and he was abbot there thirty-seven years, and there he died when he was seventy-two years old. His successors still have the place. The Southern Picts had been baptized long before: Bishop Ninia, who had been instructed at Rome, had preached baptism to them, (his church and his monastery are at Whitherne, consecrated in the name of St. Martin: there he resteth, with many holy men). Now in Ii there must ever be an abbot, and not a bishop; and all the Scottish bishops ought to be subject to him, because Columba was an abbot and not a bishop.

A.D. 806. This year the moon was eclipsed on the Kalends of September: and Eardulf, king of the Northumbrians, was driven from his kingdom; and Eanbert, bishop of Hexham, died. Also in the same year, on the 2d before the Nones of June, a cross appeared in the moon on a Wednesday at dawn; and afterwards in this year, on the third before the Kalends of September, a wonderful circle was seen about the sun.

A.D. 855. This year the heathen men, for the first time, remained over winter in Sheppey: and the same year king Ethelwulf gave by charter the tenth part of his land throughout his realm for the glory of God and his own eternal salvation. And the same year he went to Rome in great state, and dwelt there twelve months, and then returned homewards. And then Charles, king of the Franks, gave him his daughter to wife; and after that he came to his people and they were glad of it. And about two years after he came from

France he died, and his body lies at Winchester. And he reigned eighteen years and a half.

A.D. 871. Then Alfred, the son of Ethelwulf, his brother, succeeded to the kingdom of the West Saxons. And about one month after this, king Alfred with a small band fought against the whole army at Wilton, and put them to flight for a good part of the day; but the Danes had possession of the place of carnage. And this year nine general battles were fought against the army in the kingdom south of the Thames, besides which Alfred the king's brother, and single ealdormen, and king's thanes oftentimes made incursions on them which were not counted; and within the year nine earls and one king were slain. And that year the West Saxons made peace with the army.

A.D. 897. After this, in the summer of this year, the army broke up, some for East Anglia, some for Northumbria; and they who were moneyless procured themselves ships there, and went southwards over sea to the Seine. Thanks be to God, the army had not utterly broken down the English nation; but during the three years it was much more broken down by the mortality among cattle and among men, and most of all by this, that many of the most eminent king's thanes in the land died during the three years; some of whom were: Swithulf, bishop of Rochester, and Ceolmund, ealdorman of Kent, and Bertulf, ealdorman of Essex, and Wulfred, ealdorman of Hampshire, and Ealhard, bishop of Dorchester, and Eadulf, the king's thane in Sussex, and Bernwulf, the governor of Winchester, and Eadulf, the king's horse-thane, and many also besides these, though I have named the most distinguished. That same year the armies from among the East Anglians and from among the Northumbrians harassed the land of the West Saxons, chiefly on the south coast, by predatory

bands; most of all by their esks, which they had built many years before. Then king Alfred commanded long ships to be built to oppose the esks; they were full-nigh twice as long as the others; some had sixty oars, and some had more; they were both swifter and steadier, and also higher than the others. They were shapen neither like the Frisian nor the Danish, but so as it seemed to him they would be most efficient. Then some time in the same year, there came six ships to the Isle of Wight, and there did much harm, as well as in Devon, and elsewhere on the sea-coast. Then the king commanded nine of the new ships to go thither, and they obstructed their passage from the port towards the outer sea. Then went they with three of their ships out against them; and three lay in the upper part of the port in the dry; for the men were gone ashore. Then took they two of the three ships at the outer part of the port, and killed the men, and the other ship escaped; in that also the men were killed except five; they got away because the other ships were aground. They also were aground very disadvantageously: three lay aground on that side of the deep on which the Danish ships were aground, and all the rest upon the other side, so that no one of them could get to the others. But when the water had ebbed many furlongs from the ships, then the Danishmen went from their three ships to the other three which were left by the tide on their side, and then they there fought against them. There was slain Lucumon, the king's reeve, and Wulfheard, the Frisian, and Ebb, the Frisian, and Ethelere, the Frisian, and Ethelferth, the king's neat-herd, and of all the men, Frisians and English, seventy-two; and of the Danishmen, one hundred and twenty. Then, however, the flood-tide came to the Danish ships before the Christians could shove theirs off, and they therefore rowed

them out: nevertheless, they were damaged to such a degree that they could not row round the Sussex land; and there the sea cast two of them on shore, and the men were led to the king at Winchester; and he commanded them to be there hanged, and the men who were in the single ship came to East Anglia, sorely wounded. That same summer no less than twenty ships, with their crews, wholly perished upon the south coast. That same year died Wulfric, the king's horse-thane; he was also "Wealhreeve."

A.D. 901. This year died ALFRED, the son of Ethelwulf, six days before the mass of All Saints. He was king over the whole English nation, except that part which was under the dominion of the Danes; and he held the kingdom one year and a half less than thirty years. And then Edward, his son, succeeded to the kingdom. Then Ethelwald, the ætheling, his uncle's son, seized the castle at Wimborne and that at Twineham, without leave of the king and of his wise men. Then rode the king with his forces until he encamped at Badbury, near Wimborne; and Ethelwald sat within the vill, with the men who had submitted to him; and he had obstructed all the approaches towards him, and said that he would do one of two things—or there live, or there lie. But notwithstanding that, he stole away by night, and sought the army in Northumbria; and they received him for their king, and became obedient to him. And the king commanded that he should be ridden after; but they were unable to overtake him. They then beset the woman whom he had before taken, without the king's leave, and against the bishop's command; for she had previously been consecrated a nun. And in this same year Ethelred, who was ealdorman of Devonshire, died, four weeks before king Alfred.

THE BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

A.D. 937. ATHELSTAN King,
Lord among Earls,
Bracelet-bestower and
Baron of Barons,
He with his brother,
Edmund Atheling,
Gaining a lifelong
Glory in battle,
Slew with the sword-edge
There by Brunanburh, 10
Brake the shield-wall,
Hewed the linden-wood,
Hacked the battle-shield,
Sons of Edward with hammered brands.

Theirs was a greatness
Got from their grandsires—
Theirs that so often in
Strife with their enemies
Struck for their hoards and their hearths and
their homes.

Bowed the spoiler, 20
Bent the Scotsman,
Fell the ship-crews
Doomed to the death.
All the field with blood of the fighters
Flowed, from when first the great
Sun-star of morning-tide,
Lamp of the Lord God
Lord everlasting,

Glode over earth till the glorious creature
Sank to his setting. 30

There lay many a man
Marred by the javelin,
Men of the Northland
Shot over shield.
There was the Scotsman
Weary of war.

We, the West Saxons,
Long as the daylight
Lasted, in companies
Troubled the track of the host that we hated. 40
Grimly with swords that were sharp from the
grindstone,
Fiercely we hacked at the flyers before us.

Mighty the Mercian,
Hard was his hand-play,
Sparing not any of
Those that with Anlaf,
Warriors over the
Weltering waters
Borne in the bark's-bosom,
Drew to this island— 50
Doomed to the death.

Five young kings put asleep by the sword-
stroke,
Seven strong earls of the army of Anlaf
Fell on the war-field, numberless numbers,
Shipmen and Scotsmen.

Then the Norse leader,
Dire was his need of it,
Few were his following,
Fled to his war-ship;
Fleeted his vessel to sea with the king in it, 60
Saving his life on the fallow flood.

Also the crafty one,
Constantinus,
Crept to his North again,
Hoar-headed hero!
Slender warrant had
He to be proud of
The welcome of war-knives—
He that was reft of his
Folk and his friends that had 70
Fallen in conflict,
Leaving his son too
Lost in the carnage,
Mangled to morsels,
A youngster in war!

Slender reason had
He to be glad of
The clash of the war-glaive—
Traitor and trickster
And spurner of treaties— 80
He nor had Anlaf
With armies so broken
A reason for bragging
That they had the better
In perils of battle
On places of slaughter—
The struggle of standards,
The rush of the javelins,

The crash of the charges,
The wielding of weapons— 90
The play that they played with
The children of Edward.

Then with their nailed prow
Parted the Norsemen, a
Blood-reddened relic of
Javelins over
The jarring breaker, the deep-sea billow,
Shaping their way toward Dyflen again, •
Shamed in their souls.

Also the brethren, 100
King and Atheling,
Each in his glory,
Went to his own in his own West Saxonland,
Glad of the war.

Many a carcase they left to be carrion,
Many a livid one, many a sallow-skin—
Left for the white-tailed eagle to tear it, and
Left for the horny-nibbed raven to rend it, and
Gave to the garbaging war-hawk to gorge it,
and
That gray beast, the wolf of the weald. 110

Never had huger
Slaughter of heroes
Slain by the sword-edge—
Such as old writers
Have writ of in histories—
Hapt in this isle, since
Up from the East hither
Saxon and Angle from

Over the broad billow
Broke into Britain with
Haughty war-workers who
Harried the Welshman, when
Earls that were lured by the
Hunger of glory gat
Hold of the land.

120

A.D. 1066. In this year was consecrated the minster at Westminster, on Childer-mass-day. And King Edward died, on the eve of Twelfth Day; and he was buried on Twelfth Day, within the newly consecrated church at Westminster. And Harold the earl succeeded to the kingdom of England, even as the king had granted it to him, and men also had chosen him thereto; and he was crowned as king on Twelfth Day. And that same year that he became king, he went out with a fleet against William;¹ and of the while, came Tosty the earl into Humber with sixty ships. Edwin the earl came with a land-force and drove him out; and the boatmen forsook him. And he went to Scotland with twelve vessels; and Harold, the king of Norway, met him with three hundred ships, and Tosty submitted to him; and they both went into Humber, until they came to York. And Morcar the earl, and Edwin the earl fought against them; and the king of the Norwegians had the victory. And it was made known to King Harold how it there was done, and had happened; and he came there with a great army of English men, and met him at Stanfordbridge, and slew him and the earl Tosty, and boldly overcame all the army. And the while, William the earl landed at Hastings, on St. Michael's Day: and Harold came from the north, and fought against him before all his army had come up: and

¹ Earl of Normandy.

there he fell, and his two brothers, Girth and Leofwin; and William subdued this land. And he came to Westminster, and archbishop Aldred consecrated him king, and men paid him tribute, and delivered him hostages, and afterwards bought their land.

A.D. 1154. This year king Stephen died, and he was buried with his wife and his son at Faversham; they had built that monastery. When the king died the earl was beyond sea, and no man durst do other than good for very dread of him. When he came to England he was received with much honor, and was consecrated king at London on the Sunday before Christmas, and he held a great court there: and on the same day that Martin, abbot of Peterborough, should have gone thither he sickened, and he died on the 4th before the Nones of January. And that day the monks chose another abbot from among themselves. He is named William de Walteville, a good clerk, and a good man, and well beloved of the king and of all good people: and they buried the abbot honorably in the church, and soon afterwards the abbot elect and the monks went to the king at Oxford, and the king gave him the abbacy, and he departed soon afterwards to Peterborough, where he remained with the abbot before he came home. And the king was received at Peterborough with great respect, and in full procession; so he was also at Ramsey, at Thorney, and at . . . and Spalding, and. . . .

ALFRED (849-901)

PREFACE TO THE PASTORAL CARE

KING ALFRED bids greet Bishop Werfrith with his words lovingly and friendly; and I bid it be known to thee that it has come very often to my mind what wise

men there formerly were throughout England, both of the sacred and of the secular; and how happy times then were throughout England; and how the kings who ruled over the nation in those days obeyed God and his messengers; and how they maintained peace, morality, and order within their borders, and also increased their territory abroad; and how they flourished both in war and in wisdom; and also how eager the sacred orders were both for teaching and for learning, and for all the duties which they owed to God; and how foreigners sought wisdom and teaching in this land, and how we should now be obliged to get them from abroad if we were to have them. So complete was this decline in England that there were very few on this side of the Humber who could understand their books of service in English, or translate a letter from Latin into English; and I think that there were not many beyond the Humber. There were so few of them that I cannot call to mind one of them south of the Thames, when I came to the throne. To God Almighty be thanks that we have a number of teachers now. And for that reason I command thee to do as I believe thou art willing, to free thyself from worldly affairs as often as thou canst, that thou mayest use the wisdom which God has granted thee wherever thou canst. Think what punishments would come to us because of this world, if we neither loved wisdom ourselves nor let other men get it: the name only we should love in being called Christian, and very few of the practices.

When I brought all this to mind, I remembered also that I saw, before it had, all been harried and burned, how the churches throughout England were filled with treasures and books, and a great multitude of God's servants, too; but they had very little benefit of the books, because they could not at all understand them,

inasmuch as they were not written in their own language. Just as though they had said, "Our elders, who formerly held these places, loved wisdom, and through it they acquired wealth, and left it to us. Herein we can yet see their footprints, but we cannot follow them, and for that reason we have lost both the wealth and the wisdom, because we would not whole-heartedly follow their tracks."

When I brought all this to mind, then I wondered much that the good, wise men who formerly were throughout England and who had fully learned all the books, had not at all wished to translate them into their own language. But again I soon answered myself and said: "They did not think that men should ever be so thoughtless, and learning decline so; on purpose they neglected it, and wished that the wisdom in this land would be the greater as we learned more languages."

Then I recalled how the law was first known in the Hebrew language, and again, when the Greeks had learned it, they turned the whole of it into their own language, and all other books, too. And again the Romans, likewise, when they had learned them, turned all by wise translators into their own language. And all other Christian nations, too, turned a part of them into their own language. Therefore it seems better to me, if it seems so to you, that we also should translate some books most necessary for all men to know into the language which we all know, and to do as we very easily may, with God's grace, and if we have peace, namely, that all the young men now in England of free men, of those who are wealthy enough to devote themselves to it, be set to learning as long as they are incapable of any other employment, until the time that they can read English writing well; and afterwards still more teach

those in the Latin language who are to be taught more, and whom we will advance to a higher office.

When I called to mind how the knowledge of the Latin language formerly had declined throughout England, and yet many could read English writing, I began among other various and manifold cares of this kingdom to turn into English the book that is called in Latin *Pastoralis*, and in English *Shepherd's Book*, sometimes word for word, sometimes sense for sense, as I had learned it from Plegmund, my archbishop, and from Asser, my bishop, and from Grimbold, my mass-priest, and from John, my mass-priest. And after I had learned it as best as I could understand it, and as I could most intelligibly render it, I translated it into English; and I will send one to every bishopric in my kingdom; and in each there is a bookmark worth thirty mancuses.¹ And I order in God's name that no man remove the bookmark from the book, or the book from the monastery. It is unknown how long there will be such learned bishops as now, thanks to God, there are well-nigh everywhere. Therefore I desire the books to be always in their places unless the bishop wish to have them with him, or they be lent out anywhere, or anybody copy from them.

THE VOYAGES OF OHTHERE AND WULFSTAN

Ohthere told his lord, Alfred the king, that he of all the Northmen lived farthest to the north. He said that he lived in the land to the north by the West Sea. He said, though, that the land stretched still farther north from there; but it was all waste, except in a few places here and there where Finns dwelt for hunting in winter and in summer for fishing in the sea. He said that

¹ A *mancus* is worth the eighth of a pound.

once he wanted to find out how far the land extended to the northward and whether any man lived to the north of that waste. So he voyaged due north along the coast, kept all the way the waste land to starboard and the open sea on the larboard for three days. Then he was as far north as the whalers ever go. Thereupon he still went due north as far as he could sail in another three days. There the land curved to the east, or the sea in on that land, he did not know which; but he knew that there he waited for a wind from the west or somewhat from the north, and then sailed along the shore easterly as far as he could in four days' sailing. There he had to wait for a wind from due north, for there the land curved due south, or the sea in on that land, he did not know which. Thence he sailed along the coast due south as far as he was able by five days' sailing. At that point there was a large river running into the land. Then they turned up into this river, for they dared not sail beyond this river because of enemies, for the land was all inhabited on the other side of the river. He had not met with any inhabited land since he voyaged from his own home; but all the way was waste land on the starboard, except for fishermen and fowlers and hunters, and they were all Finns; and the open sea was always on the larboard. The Permians had very well cultivated their land; but they dared not go in there. The land of the Terfinns was all waste, except where hunters lived, or fishermen, or fowlers.

Many stories the Permians told him both about their own land and about the lands which were about them; but he knew not the truth of it, because he did not see it himself. The Finns and the Permians, it seemed to him, spoke nearly alike. In addition to seeing the country he went thither for walruses especially, for they

have very fine bone in their teeth—they brought some teeth to the king—and their hides are very good for ship-ropes.† The whale is much smaller than other whales; it is not more than seven ells long; but in his own country is the best whaling—they are eight and forty ells long, and the largest are fifty ells. He said that he was one of six who killed sixty of these in two days.

He was a very wealthy man in such things as make up their wealth, that is, in wild beasts. He still had, when he visited the king, six hundred tame deer unsold. These deer they call reindeer; six were decoy deer, which are very valuable among the Finns, for with them they capture the wild reindeer. He was among the first men in the country, though he had not more than twenty horned cattle and twenty sheep and twenty swine, and the little that he ploughed he ploughed with horses. But their income is mainly in the tribute which the Finns give them. That tribute consists of animal skins, feathers, and whale bone, and ship-ropes which are made of whale and seal hide. Each one pays in proportion to his means; the richest must pay fifteen marten skins, and five of reindeer, one bear skin, and ten measures of feathers, a bear or otterskin kirtle, and two ship-ropes, each sixty ells long, one made of whale's hide, the other of seal.

He said that the country of the Northmen was very long and very narrow. All that his man can use either for grazing or ploughing lies along the coast, and that is very rocky in some places, and wild moors lie to the east and along the inhabited land. On these moors dwell the Finns. And the inhabited land is broadest to the east, and the further north the narrower it is. Eastward it may be sixty miles broad, or a little broader; and midway thirty or more; and northward, he said,

where it was the narrowest, it might be three miles broad to the moor. Furthermore, the moor is so broad in certain places that a man would take two weeks in crossing it, and in some places so broad that a man could cross it in six days.

Then along the land to the southward, on the other side of the moor, is Sweden, as far as the land to the northward, and along the northern land, the country of the Cwens. The Cwens at times harry the Northmen over the moor, at times the Northmen harry them. And there are very large fresh lakes beyond the moors; the Cwens carry their boats over land to the lakes, and from there harry the Northmen; they have very small boats and very light——.

WULFSTAN'S VOYAGE

Esthonia is very large and there are very many towns there, and in every town is a king. And there is very much honey, and fishing. The king and the richest men drink mare's milk, but the poor people and the slaves drink mead. There is much strife between them. And there is no ale brewed among the Esthonians, but there is mead enough.

There is a custom among the Esthonians, that when a man dies he lies in his house unburnt with his relatives and friends for a month, sometimes two; and the kings and the other high-born men as much longer as they have the more possessions; sometimes half a year they are unburnt, lying above earth in their houses. And all the while that the body is within there must be drinking and playing until the day that they burn it. On the very day on which they are to bear him to the pyre, they divide his property, whatever is left after the drinking and the playing, into five or six shares,

sometimes more, according to the extent of his property. Then they place the largest share about a mile from the town, then the second, then the third, until it is all placed within the one mile; and the smallest share must be nearest the town in which the dead man lies. Then there must be gathered together all the men in the country who have the swiftest horses, some five or six miles from the property. Then they all run toward the property; then comes the man who has the swiftest horse to the first and largest share, and so one after another, until it is all taken; and he who runs to the property nearest the town takes the least share. And then each one rides his way with his property, and he may keep it all; and for that reason swift horses are excessively dear there. And when his property is all spent, they bear him out and burn him with his weapons and garments. Generally they spend all his wealth, since the dead man lies for so long in the house and they place his property along the way, which the strangers race for and take.

And it is also a custom among the Esthonians that men of every tribe must be burned, and if any man finds a bone unburned, they shall pay dearly for it. And there is among the Esthonians one tribe that is able to cause cold; and the dead men lie so long and do not decay because they produce this cold on them. And if a man sets two vats full of ale or of water, they make them both freeze over, in summer just the same as in winter.

ÆLFRIC (c.955-c.1020)

THE ASSUMPTION OF SAINT JOHN THE APOSTLE

JOHN THE EVANGELIST, Christ's darling, was on this

day through God's visitation, taken to the joy of the kingdom of heaven. He was the son of Christ's maternal aunt, and he loved him particularly, not so much for the kinship as for the purity of his uncorrected chastity. He was in chastity chosen to God, and he ever continued in undefiled chastity. It is read in historic narratives that he would marry, and Christ was invited to his nuptials. Then it befell that at the nuptials wine was wanting. Jesus then bade the serving men fill six stone vessels with pure water, and he with his blessing turned the water to noble wine. This is the first miracle that he openly wrought in his state of man. Now John was so stimulated by that miracle that he forthwith left his bride in maidenhood, and ever afterwards followed the Lord, and was by him inwardly beloved, because he had withdrawn himself from fleshly lusts. Verily to this beloved disciple Jesus entrusted his mother, when, suspended on the cross, he redeemed mankind, that his pure life might take care of the pure virgin Mary, and that she might continue ministering to her sister's son.

Some time after Christ's ascension to heaven, a cruel emperor reigned in the Roman empire after Nero, who was called Domitian, a persecutor of the Christians. He commanded a vat to be filled with boiling oil, and the great evangelist to be thrust therein; but he, through God's protection, went uninjured from that hot bath. Afterwards, when the cruel one might not suppress the preaching of the blessed apostle, he sent him into exile to an island that is called Patmos, that he there, through sharpness of hunger, might perish. But the Almighty Savior did not leave his beloved apostle to neglect, but revealed to him in that exile the revelation of things to come, concerning which he wrote the book which is called *Apocalypse*; and the cruel

Domitian was slain in the same year by the hand of his senators, and they all unanimously resolved that all his decrees should be annulled. Then was Nerva, a very honorable man, chosen for emperor. With his consent the apostle returned with great worship, he who with contumely had been sent into banishment. Men and women ran to meet him, rejoicing and saying, "Blessed is he who cometh in the name of God."

As the apostle John was entering the city of Ephesus, there was borne toward him the corpse of a widow to be buried; her name was Drusiana. She was of great faith, and gave much in alms, and the poor, whom she bountifully fed, sad, with weeping, followed the corpse. Then the apostle bade them set down the bier, and said, "My Lord, Jesus Christ! Raise thee, Drusiana; arise and return home, and prepare food for us in thy house." Drusiana then arose as if from sleep awakened, and mindful of the apostle's command, returned home.

On the second day the apostle going into the street observed where a philosopher was accompanying two brothers who had turned all their parents' treasure into precious gems and would crush them in the sight of all the people as a spectacle, in contempt, as it were, of worldly riches. It was common at that time for those who would sedulously learn philosophy to change their property for gems, and break them in pieces; or for a wedge of gold, and throw it into the sea; lest the contemplation of those riches should hinder them at their study. Then the apostle called the philosopher Graton to him, and said, "It is foolish that any one should despise worldly riches for praise of men, and be condemned at God's doom. Vain is the medicine that cannot heal the sick; as also is vain the doctrine that healeth not the sins and vices of the soul. Verily, my teacher, Christ, enjoined a youth who desired eternal

life, in these words, That he should sell all his wealth, and distribute the value to the poor, if he would be perfect; and he should afterwards have his treasure in heaven, and, in addition thereto, eternal life." The philosopher Graton answered him, "These jewels are crushed for idle vaunt; but if thy teacher is the true God, join the fragments to soundness, that their value may benefit the poor." John then gathered the fragments of the jewels, and looked to heaven, thus saying, "Lord Jesus, to thee no thing is difficult; thou didst restore this crushed world for thy faithful, through sign of the holy rood; restore now these precious gems, by thine angels' hands, that these ignorant men may acknowledge thy powers, and in thee believe." Lo, then suddenly the gems became sound, so that even no sign of their former broken condition was seen. Then the philosopher Graton, together with the youths, fell forthwith at the feet of John, believing in God. The apostle baptized him with all his family, and he began openly to preach God's faith. The two brothers, Atticus and Eugenius, gave their gems, and distributed all their wealth to the poor, and followed the apostle, and a great multitude of believers also joined themselves to him.

Then on a certain time the apostle came to the city of Pergamus, where the before-mentioned youths formerly dwelt, and saw their servants decorated with fine linen, and shining in worldly splendor. Then were they pierced through with the devil's darts, and sad in mind, that they in poverty should go with one miserable cloak, and their servants be shining in worldly splendor. Then perceived the apostle the diabolical wiles, and said, "I see that your mind and your countenance are changed, because ye have distributed your riches to the poor, and followed my Lord's doctrine: go now therefore to the wood, and hew a burthen of rods, and bring them to

me." They did as he had commanded, and he in God's name blessed the green rods, and they were turned to red gold. Again the apostle said, "Go now to the sea-strand, and fetch me pebble-stones." They did so, and John by God's majesty blessed them, and they were turned to precious gems. Then said the apostle, "Go to the smithy, and try this gold and these gems." They went, and came again, thus saying, "All the gold-smiths say that they have never before seen such pure and such red gold: also the jewellers say that they have never before met with such precious gems." Then said the apostle to them, "Take this gold and these gems, and go and buy landed property, seeing that ye have lost heavenly riches. Buy yourselves purple kirtles, that ye for a little while may shine as the rose, that ye may speedily fade. Be flourishing and rich for a season, that ye may be poor for ever. What, may not the Almighty Ruler so act that he make his servants powerful before the world, abounding in wealth, and incomparably to shine? But he has placed warfare for the believing souls, that they may believe in order to possess the eternal riches, they who for his name despise temporary possessions. Ye healed the sick in the name of Jesus, ye drove out devils, ye gave sight to the blind, and cured every disease. Behold, now this gift is withdrawn from you, and ye are become poor wretches, ye who were great and strong. The devils stood in so great awe of you, that at your behest they forsook the possessed demoniacs; now ye yourselves dread devils. The heavenly possessions are common to us all. Naked we were born, and naked we depart. The brightness of the sun, and the light of the moon, and of all the stars are common to the high and the low. Rain-showers and the church-door, baptism and forgiveness of sins, partaking of the housel and God's visitation are common

to all, poor and rich: but the unhappy covetous wishes to have more than suffices him, though he enjoys not freedom from care in his abundance. The covetous hath one body and divers garments; he hath one belly and a thousand men's sustenance; but that which he, through the vice of avarice, cannot give to any order, he hoardeth, and knoweth not for whom, as the prophet said, 'Vainly is every man troubled who hoardeth, and knoweth not for whom he gathereth.' Verily he is not lord of those possessions, when he cannot distribute them, but he is the slave of those possessions, when he wholly serveth them; and in addition thereto, diseases of his body increase, so that he may not enjoy food or drink. He cares night and day that his money be preserved; he attends greedily to his gain, his rent, his buildings; he bereaves the indigent, he follows his lusts and his pleasure; then suddenly departs he from this world, naked and charged with crimes, bearing with him his sins alone; therefore shall he suffer punishment everlasting."

Behold, while the apostle was speaking this lecture, a certain widow bare her son to be buried, who had been married thirty days before. The afflicted mother, together with the mourners, wailing prostrated herself at the holy apostle's feet, praying that he would, in God's name, rear up her son, as he did the widow Drusiana. John then, pitying the grief of the mother and the mourners, prostrated his body on the earth, in long prayer, and at length rising up, again with upraised hands prayed a long time. Having done thus thrice, he bade them unwrap the corpse of the youth, and said, "O thou youth, who through thy flesh's lust hast early lost thy soul; O thou youth, thou knewest not thy Creator; thou knewest not the Savior of men; thou knewest not the true friend, and hast therefore fallen on the

worst enemy. Now I have shed my tears, and earnestly prayed for thy sensuality, that thou mayest from death arise, and to these two brothers, Atticus and Eugenius, declare how great glory they have lost, and what punishment they have earned." On this the youth Stacteus arose, and fell at the feet of John, and began to chide the brothers who had been perverted, thus saying, "I saw the angels who had charge of you sadly weeping, and the accursed fiend rejoicing in your destruction. For you was the kingdom of heaven ready, and shining structures filled with repasts, and with eternal light: these ye have lost through heedlessness, and have got for yourselves dark dwellings filled with serpents, and with crackling flames, full of unspeakable torments and horrible stench; in which groaning and howling cease not day nor night: pray, therefore, with inward heart, this apostle of God, your teacher, that he raise you from eternal perdition, as he hath raised me from death, and that he your souls, which are now blotted from the living book, lead back to God's grace and mercy."

The youth then, Stacteus, who had risen from death, together with the brothers, prostrated himself in the footsteps of John, and the people with them, all unanimously praying that he would intercede with God for them. The apostle then commanded the two brothers that they for thirty days in penitence should sacrifice to God by penance, and in that space should earnestly pray that the golden rods might be turned again to their former nature, and the gems to their worthlessness. After thirty days' space, when they could not by their prayers restore the gold and the gems to their nature, they came with weeping to the apostle, thus saying, "Ever hast thou taught mercy, and that one should have mercy on another; and if one have mercy on another, how much more will God show mercy to and pity men,

his handiwork! The sin which we have committed with covetous eyes, we now with weeping eyes repent." Then answered the apostle, "Bear the rods to the wood, and the stones to the sea-strand: they shall be restored to their nature." When they had done this they again received God's grace, so that they drove out devils, and healed the blind and the sick, and performed many miracles, in the Lord's name, as they before had done.

The apostle then converted to God all the country of Asia, which is accounted the half part of the world; and wrote the fourth book of Christ, which treats most of Christ's divinity. The other three evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, wrote rather of Christ's human state. Then there sprung up heretics in God's church, who said that Christ was not before he was born of Mary. Thereupon all the diocesan bishops besought the holy apostle to compose the fourth book, and extinguish the audacity of the heretics. John then ordered a general fast of three days; and after the fast he was so greatly filled with the spirit of God, that he excelled all God's angels and all creatures with his exalted mind, and began the evangelical memorial with these words, "*In principio erat verbum,*" etc., that is in English, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God; this was in the beginning with God; all things are made through him, and without him nothing is created." And so forth, in all the evangelical memorial, he made known many things concerning Christ's divinity, how he eternally without beginning was begotten of his Father, and reigneth with him in unity of the Holy Ghost, ever without end. He wrote few things of his human nature, because the three other evangelists had composed their books abundantly concerning that.

It happened at a certain time, that the idolaters, who

were yet unbelieving, said that they would force the apostle to their heathenship: whereupon the apostle said to the idolaters, "Go all together to God's church, and call all of you to your gods that, through their might, the church may fall down; then will I turn to your heathenship. But if the power of your god may not cast down the holy church, I will cast down your temple, through the might of the Almighty God, and I will crush your idol; and it shall then seem right that ye cease from your error, and believe in the true God, who alone is Almighty." The idolaters assented to this proposal, and John with kind words exhorted the people to go out from the devil's temple; and with clear voice cried before them all, "In the name of God let this temple fall down with all the idols that dwell within it, that this multitude may know that this idolatry is the worship of the devil." Behold then, the temple fell suddenly to the ground, with all its idols turned to dust. On that same day twelve thousand heathens were turned to belief in Christ, and hallowed with baptism.

But the chief idolater still refused with great perverseness, and said that he would not believe unless John drank poison, and through God's might overcame the deadly drink. Then said the apostle, "Though thou give me poison, through God's name it shall not hurt me." Then said the idolater Aristodemus, "Thou shalt first see another drink it, and instantly die, that so at least thy heart may fear the death-bearing drink." John answered him, "If thou wilt believe in God, I will fearlessly receive this drink." Then Aristodemus went to the prefect, and took from his prison two thieves, and gave them the poison before all the people, in the presence of John; and they immediately after the drink died. Then the idolater gave the venomous drink also to the apostle, and he having armed his mouth and all his

body with the sign of the rood, and exorcised the poison in God's name, with bold heart drank it all. Aristodemus then and the people beheld the apostle three hours of the day, and saw him having a glad countenance, without paleness and fear: and they all cried, "There is one true God, whom John worshippeth." Then said the idolater to the apostle, "Yet I doubt; but if thou, in the name of thy God, wilt raise up these dead thieves, then will my heart be cleansed from every doubt." Then said John, "Aristodemus, take my tunic, and lay it on the corpses of the dead men, and say, 'The apostle of Jesus Christ hath sent me to you, that ye in his name may arise from death, and that every man may know that death and life minister to my Savior.'" He then, at the apostle's command, bare his tunic, and laid it on the two dead ones, and they forthwith rose up whole. When the idolater saw that, he prostrated himself at the feet of John, and then went to the prefect, and announced to him those miracles with a loud voice. Then they both sought the apostle, praying for his compassion: whereupon the apostle enjoined them a fast of seven days, and afterwards baptized them; and after their baptism they cast down all their idols, and with the aid of their kinsmen, and with all art, raised a great church to God in honor of the apostle.

When the apostle was ninety-nine years old the Lord Christ appeared to him with the other apostles, whom he had taken from this life, and said, "John, come to me; it is time that thou with thy brethren shouldst feast at my banquet." John then arose, and went towards Jesus. But He said to him, "Lo, on Sunday, the day of my resurrection, thou shalt come to me": and after those words the Lord returned to heaven. The apostle greatly rejoiced in that promise, and at sun-

rise early rising came to the church, and from cock-crowing until the third hour, taught God's law, and sang mass to them, and said that the Savior had called him to heaven on that day. He then ordered his grave to be dug opposite the altar, and the dust to be removed; and he went quick and whole into his grave, and with outstretched hands cried to God, "Lord Christ, I thank thee that thou hast invited me to thy banquet: thou knowest that with all my heart I have desired thee. Oft have I prayed thee that I might go to thee, but thou saidst that I should abide, that I might gain more people to thee. Thou hast preserved my body against every pollution, and thou hast ever illumined my soul, and hast nowhere forsaken me. Thou hast set in my mouth the word of thy truth, and I have written down the lore which I heard from thy mouth, and the wonders which I saw thee work. Now I commit to thee, Lord! thy children, those which thy church, maiden and mother, through water and the Holy Ghost have gained to thee. Receive me to my brothers with whom thou camest and invitedst me. Open towards me the gate of life, that the princes of darkness may not find me. Thou art Christ, Son of the living God, who, at thy Father's behest, hast saved the world, and hast sent us the Holy Ghost. Thee we praise and thank for thy manifold benefits throughout the world eternal. Amen."

After this prayer a heavenly light appeared above the apostle, within the grave, shining for an hour so bright that no man's sight might look on the rays of light; and with that light he gave up his spirit to the Lord, who had invited him to his kingdom. He departed as joyfully from the pain of death, from this present life, as he was exempt from bodily defilement. Verily his grave was afterwards found filled with manna. Manna the heavenly meat was called which

for forty years fed the people of Israel in the wilderness. Now this food was found in the grave of John, and nothing else, and the meat is growing in it to this present day. Many miracles have there been manifested, and sick healed and released from all calamities through the apostle's intercession. This hath the Lord Christ granted unto him, to whom is glory and honor with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever without end. Amen.

WULFSTAN'S ADDRESS TO THE ENGLISH

Beloved brethren, know the truth: this world is in haste, and nears its end; and so, in the world, ever the later is the worse, and because of men's sins it must needs from day to day grow very evil e'er Antichrist shall come; yea, truly, then will it be dreadful and terrible all over the earth.

Know too, for a truth, that for many years now the devil has led this people too far astray, and there is little faith among men for all their fair speaking; too much has unrighteousness ruled the land, and never have many men considered a remedy with the zeal they should; but every day man adds evil to evil and works iniquity and all manner of injustice too widely among this people. And so, because of this we have suffered many losses and indignities; and if we are to look for any relief then must we deserve it of God better than we have done e'er this. We have greatly deserved and merited that evil which lies over us, and with even greater deserving we must obtain the cure from God, if henceforth things are to be better. For lo, we know full well that a great breach needs mighty mending and a great fire no little water, if a man shall think to quench that fire. And great is the need of every man that

henceforth he observe God's law with diligence, better than he did before, and fulfil God's commandments with righteousness.

Among the heathen peoples a man dares not withhold little or much of that ordained for the worship of the idols: but we too often everywhere withhold the rights of God. Among the heathen a man dare not injure any of those things, within or without, that are brought to the idols and ordained for sacrifice: but we have clean despoiled God's house, inside and out. And too, the servants of God are everywhere deprived of honor and protection; and some men say that no one dare in any wise ill-treat the servants of idols among the heathen, as men now do too widely to the servants of God, where Christians should keep God's law and protect God's servants.

I speak truly, there is need for a remedy, for the rights of God have too long been growing less on every side in this land, and the laws of the folk have deteriorated entirely too much since Eadgar¹ died, and the sanctuaries are too widely unprotected, and the houses of God are clean despoiled of their old rights and stripped within of everything seemly, and holy orders have now long been despised; too many a widow has been unrighteously forced to take a husband, and too many lowly, humble, poor men are sorely betrayed and cruelly ensnared, in benefit and sustenance, in property and possessions, all too often; and undeservedly they are sold far from this country into the power of strangers; and for a little theft the child in the cradle is made a slave with cruel injustice, throughout this people. Free-right is taken away, thrall-right is restricted and alms-right is diminished. Free men may not rule themselves, nor go where they will, nor use their property as they desire; thralls may not have

that which they have got for their own through hard toil, nor what good men have given them for the grace of God and for God's love have given as alms-gifts; but each alms-right that a man should give for God's grace with right zeal is made smaller or withheld. For unrighteousness is too generally common to man, and unlawfulness is dear, and, to speak quickly, God's laws are hateful and his teaching is despised; and for this we suffer many indignities through God's anger, as everyone knows, and the loss will be common to all this people, though men will not believe it, unless God shall save.

For it is clear and plain to us all that before this we have more often gone astray than done well, and for this our people is constantly disturbed. This long time nothing has prospered at home or abroad, but on every side there have been frequent wasting and famine, burning and bloodshed; stealing and murder, plague and pestilence, murrain and disease, slander and hate and the stealing of thieves have sorely distressed us, and heavy taxes have weighed upon us, and bad weather has blighted our crops. Because in this land, it would seem, now for many years have been great unrighteousness and fickle faith between men everywhere. Many a time kinsman has defended kinsman no more than a stranger, nor father his son, nor, sometimes, son his own father, nor one brother the other. Not one of us has ordered his life as he should, neither men in holy orders according to their regulations, nor laymen according to the law; but we have followed our desires according to our own dictates, and we have held neither the teaching nor the law of God or men as we should. No man has purposed honestly towards another as rightly as he should, but almost everyone has betrayed and injured others in word and deed; and how wickedly

has nearly everyone stabbed his neighbor in the back with shameful scandal and calumnies: worse if he might.

For here in our land are great infidelities towards God and mankind, and too, in our land many are traitors to their lords in various ways. And the greatest of all treasons in the world is that a man should betray the soul of his lord, and there is also a very great treachery in the world—that a man should deprive his lord of his life or drive him living from his land; and both of these have been done in this land. Eadweard² men betrayed and afterward killed, and Æthelred³ men drove out of his country. And too many sponsors and godchildren have been killed widely throughout this people, and all too many innocent men have been ruined. And too many holy places have been destroyed because in the past certain men have been lodged there who should not have been if men showed reverence for the sanctuary of God. And too many Christian folk are now all the time sold out of this land; and all that is hateful to God, if you will believe me.

And we also know well where this sad thing has come to pass, that a father has sold his son for a price, and a son his mother, and one brother another into the power of strangers out of this land; and all these are monstrous and frightful deeds, as who will may understand. And yet it is much more than this that afflicts this people. Many are forsworn and liars, and pledges are broken often and commonly; and it is clear that in this land the wrath of God lies heavily upon us, let him understand who can.

And oh! what greater shame can come to man through God's wrath than often befalls us for our proper deserts? For if a thrall run away from his lord, and turn from Christendom to the pirates (the Danes), and

it afterwards comes to pass that thane and thrall meet in the clash of weapons, if the thrall foully kill the thane then the thane shall lie without wergild for his kinsmen, but if the thane foully kill the thrall whom he once owned he shall pay thanegild.⁴ Debasing laws and shameful tribute are, through God's wrath, common with us, as who will may understand, and many calamities befall this people constantly. For a long time now nothing has thriven at home or abroad, but there has been devastation and hate constantly on every side, and long have the English been without victory and too sorely disheartened by God's anger, and the sea-pirates have been so strong, with God's permission, that often in battle one of them has put to flight ten of us, and two have routed twenty, and sometimes more, all for our sins. And often a thrall will bind fast the thane who was his master, and force him to thralldom through God's wrath. Alas for the degradation and the public shame that the English now have all through God's wrath! Often two or three vikings will drive a multitude of Christian men from sea to sea out of this country enslaved together, to the public shame of us all, if we really knew anything or would understand aught aright. But all this dishonor that we so often endure we requite with honor to them that shame us: we constantly reward them and they oppress us every day. They harry and burn, plunder and rob, and carry off to their ships; and lo! is there anything in all these calamities clear and manifest except God's wrath?

Nor is it a wonder that we are in trouble, for we know very well that for many years now men have not often recked what they wrought in word or deed; but this people, as it seems, has been very evil, through manifold sins and many misdeeds, through murder and crime, through avarice and greed, through stealing and

robbery, through the betrayal of men and heathen vices, through plots and treacheries, through law-breaking and sedition, through kinsmen's attacks on kinsmen and through murders, through violations of religious orders and adulteries, through incests and through various fornications. And therefore, as we said before, through breaking of oaths and through breaking of pledges and various treacheries far and wide, more than should be are ruined and forsworn and breaches of festival and fasting are common. And here on earth God's adversaries abound, degenerate apostates, foes to the church, and grim persecutors of the people, all too many of them, proud despisers of holy law and Christian customs, and foolish deriders everywhere among the people of the things that God's servant decrees, and chiefest, of the things that most clearly belong with right to God's law.

And therefore has it come about that men far and wide are more ashamed of their good deeds than of their evil ones; because too often men scorn good deeds with derision and revile God-fearing men all too much, and especially men despise and greet too often with evil those who love the right and have in any measure the fear of God. And because men so do that they despise all that they should praise, and loathe what they should love, because of this they bring all too many to evil thoughts and unrighteous deeds, so that they are not ashamed, even though they sin greatly and altogether offend against God; but for empty insults they are ashamed to amend their misdeeds as the books teach, like fools who because of their life of pride will not save themselves while they yet may.

Too many in this land are living in grievous impunity in sin. Here are, as we said before, manslayers and kin-slayers and priest-slayers and haters of monasteries

and traitors and open apostates, and here are perjurers and murderers and vow-breakers and law-breakers and men who have sinned grievously through incest and various fornications, and here are harlots and murderers of children and many foul adulterers, and here are witches and sorceresses, and here are plundering and robberies and world-spoilers and thieves and injurers of the people and traitors and breakers of treaty and, to speak shortly, unnumbered kinds of all manner of crime and misdeeds.

And this shames us not, but we are ashamed to begin a reform, as the books teach, and that is clearly seen in this miserable, sinful land. Let each man earnestly consider himself, and let him not delay too long in God's name. Let us do as is needful for us, save ourselves as we surely may, lest we perish all together.

Once there was among the Britons a wise man, named Gildas,⁵ who wrote about their evil deeds, how they outraged God so excessively with their sins that at last he let an English army win their land and entirely destroy the British host. And that happened, as he said, through the learned breaking the rules of their orders and the unlettered breaking the law, through the plundering of the rich and through greed for ill-gotten gains, through the bad laws of the people and through unjust decisions, through the sloth and folly of the bishops, and through the wicked cowardice of the servants of God, who too often kept silence concerning the truth, and mumbled to themselves when they should have cried out because of the foul wantonness of the people; and through gluttony and manifold sins they lost their country, and themselves perished.

But let us do as is needful for us, and take warning by all this; and what I say is truth, that we know of some worse deeds among the English than we have heard

of among the early Britons; and we have great need to take thought and to make intercession zealously with God's self. And let us do as is needful for us, turn toward the right, and in some measure forsake unrighteousness and most earnestly amend those things wherein we earlier offended. Let us creep to Christ, and call on Him often with trembling heart, and deserve His mercy; and let us love God and follow God's laws, and perform with zeal what we promised when we received baptism or what they promised who were our sponsors at baptism. And let us order our words and our works aright and earnestly cleanse our inward thoughts, and carefully hold to oath and pledge, and have some truth between us without evil practice, and let us often think on that great judgment that we all shall come to, and save ourselves with zeal from the welling fire of hell-torment, and earn for ourselves the glory and joy that God has prepared for them who work His will on earth. O God our help! Amen.

MIDDLE ENGLISH
LITERATURE

LAYAMON

ARTHUR'S LAST BATTLE

From *Brut*

THEN came there on a time a valiant man riding, and brought news to Arthur the king from Modred, his sister's son. To Arthur he was welcome, because Arthur thought that he brought messages most pleasing. Arthur lay the night long and spoke with the young knight; but the latter would never tell him truthfully how it fared. On the morrow when it was day and warriors began to stir, Arthur arose and stretched his arms; he arose and sat down as though he were exceeding sick. Then asked him a fair knight, "Lord, how didst thou fare last night?" Arthur then answered—his mind was uneasy—"Last night in my sleep, as I lay in my chamber, a dream came to me; therefore I am full sorry. I dreamed that men raised me up in a hall; the hall I began to bestride, as though I would ride. All the lands that I possessed, all I there surveyed. And Gawain sat before me; my sword he bore in his hand. Then Modred advanced there with innumerable folk. He bore in his hand a battle-axe strong. He began to hew most stoutly, and he hewed the posts that held up the hall. Then I saw Guinevere also, dearest of women to me; all the great hall with her hand she drew down. The hall began to fall, and I fell to the ground, so that my right arm broke. Then said Modred, "Have that!" Down fell the hall, and

Gawain began to fall, and fell on the earth. Both his arms broke. And I seized my dear sword with my left hand and smote off Modred's head so that it rolled on the field. And I cut the queen all into pieces with my dear sword, and afterward I set her down in a black pit. And all my good people took to flight, so that I knew not under Christ where they had fled. But I stood upon a woodland and I there began to wander far over the moors. There I saw vultures and horrible birds. Then came a golden lion over the down, a beast most gracious, that our Lord made. The lion ran toward me and seized me by the middle and began to move and went to the sea. I saw the waves drive in the sea there, and the lion went into the flood with me. When we came into the sea, the waves snatched her from me. Came a fish and brought me to land. Then was I all wet, and weary from sorrow, and sick. When I awoke, I began to quake exceedingly; I began to tremble as though I were on fire. And so I have all night long thought much of my dream, for I knew with certainty that my bliss had gone; forever in my life I must endure sorrow. Alas, that I have not here Guinevere my queen!"

Then answered the knight: "Lord, thou art wrong; men should never interpret a dream with sorrow. Thou art the greatest man that reigneth on land, and the wisest of all that live under heaven. If it had happened—and our Lord will not have it so—that Modred, thy sister's son, had taken thy queen, and set all thy royal land in his own hand, which thou grantedst him when thou didst think of going to Rome; and had he done all this with his treachery, thou mightest yet avenge thee worthily with weapons, and again hold thy land and govern thy people, and fell thine enemies, who

did evil to thee, and slay them all utterly, that there remain not one."

Arthur then answered, noblest of all kings, "As long as is time itself, I never thought that Modred, my relative, dearest of men to me, would ever betray me for all my realm, nor Guinevere, my queen, weaken in thought; would it not begin, for any worldly man!"

At once the knight answered, "I tell thee the truth, dear king, for I am thine underling. Thus has Modred done: thy queen he has taken, and thy fair land set in his own hand. He is king and she is queen. Of thy coming they have no thought, for they think never in truth that thou shalt come again from Rome. I am thine own man and saw this treachery, and I have come to thee, thyself, to tell thee the truth. My head be my pledge that I have told thee truth, without lying, of thy beloved queen and of Modred, thy sister's son, how he has wrested Britain from thee."

Then sat they all silent in Arthur's hall; then was there sorrow with the good king; then were the British men for that reason most downcast. Then after a while voices broke out; afar men might hear the noise of the Britons, and began to tell in many a speech how they would destroy Modred and the queen, and wipe out all the people who held with Modred.

Arthur then called, most gracious of all Britons, "Sit ye quietly, knights in hall, and I will tell you strange news. Now tomorrow, when it is day, and the Lord sends it, forth I shall march toward Britain, and Modred I will slay and burn the queen. And I will destroy all who are pleased with the treachery. And here I will leave the dearest to me of men, Howell, my dear kinsman, highest of my kin; and half my army I will leave in this country to hold all this realm which I have in my hand. And when these things are finished, I shall

come back to Rome and yield my fair land to Gawain my kinsman, and then I will carry out my threat, by my bare life: all my enemies shall make the fated journey!"

Then up stood Gawain, who was Arthur's kinsman, and spoke—the earl was wroth:—“Almighty God, ruler of judgment, guardian of earth, why has it happened that my brother Modred has committed this sin? Today I forsake him here before this people, and I will destroy him, with the Lord's will. I myself will hang him, highest of all villains; the queen, by God's law, I shall tear in pieces with horses. For may I never be merry while I live until I have avenged my uncle with the best!"

The Britons answered with bold voice: “All our weapons are ready; tomorrow we shall march!"

On the morrow, when it was day, and the Lord sent it, Arthur went forth with his noble folk; half he it left, and half he it led forth. Through the land he marched until he came to Whitsand; ships he had soon, many and well equipped. But for a fortnight the army lay there, awaiting the weather, deprived of wind.

Now there was a certain wicked knight in Arthur's army; as soon as he heard Modred doomed to death, he took his servant quickly and sent to this land, and sent word to Guinevere to tell how it had happened, and how Arthur was on the march with a great army, and how he would take on, and how he would act. The queen came to Modred, dearest to her of men, and gave him tidings of Arthur the king, how he would take on, and how he would act. Modred took his messengers and sent to the land of the Saxons for Childrich—the king was very powerful—and bade him come to Britain; he should have possession of it. Modred bade Childrich, the strong and the powerful, to send messengers afar to the four quarters of the land of the Saxons, and com-

mand all the knights they could find to come soon to this kingdom; and he would give Childrich part of his kingdom, all beyond the Humber, because he should help him to battle against his uncle, Arthur the king.

Childrich advanced soon into Britain. When Modred had assembled his army, then were there numbered sixty thousand valiant warriors of heathen folk, when they had come thither for Arthur's harm, and to help Modred, most knavish of men. When the army was assembled of each tribe, then were there a hundred thousand in a mass, heathen and Christian, with Modred the king.

Arthur lay at Whitsand; a fortnight seemed too long to him; and Modred knew all that Arthur intended to do there; each day came messengers to him from the king's army. Then it happened on a time that much rain began to fall, and the wind began to turn, and blew from the east. And Arthur embarked with all his army and commanded his seamen to bring him to Romney, where he thought to come up into this land. When he came to the haven, Modred was there before him. As the day began to light they began to fight, all the long day; many a man lay there dead. Some fought on land, some by the strand; some hurled spears from out the ships. Gawain went before and cleared the way, and slew there soon eleven thanes. He slew Childrich's son; he had come there with his father. The sun went to rest. Woe was then to the men. Gawain was slain there and deprived of his life through a Saxon earl—sorry be his soul! Then was Arthur sad and sorrowful in his heart therefore, and these words he spoke, most powerful of all Britons: "Now I have lost my dear followers. I knew by my dream what sorrow had been allotted me. Slain is Angel the king, who was my own darling, and Gawain, my sister's son—woe is me that I

was born man. Up now from ship at once, my valiant knights!"

As he spoke sixty thousand good fighters turned to the fight, and broke Modred's ranks, and he himself was almost taken. Modred began to flee; and his people to follow after. They fled like fiends; the fields even trembled; the stones babbled with the blood-streams. Then would the fight have been quite finished but the night came too soon; if night had not come on they would all have been slain. The night separated them over grassland and over downs. And Modred came so far forth that he was at London. The citizens heard how it all had fared, and refused him entrance, and all his folk. Modred then went toward Winchester and they received him with all his men. And Arthur followed with all his might until he came to Winchester with a huge army, and besieged the city. And Modred therein abode.

When Modred saw that Arthur was so near, often he thought of what he should do. Then on the same night he ordered all his knights to go out of the city with their weapons, and said that he would fight a battle there. He promised the citizens free law for ever provided they would help him in his need.

When it was daylight their battle-array was ready. Arthur saw that; the king was wroth. He had trumpets blown and men summoned to battle. He ordered all his thanes and his noble knights to join battle together and slay his enemies and destroy the city and hang the citizenry. They marched together and sternly fought. Modred then thought what he might do, and he did there as he did elsewhere, treachery with the most. Ever he acted wickedly; he betrayed his companions before Winchester, and had his dearest knights called to him at once, and his dearest friends all, all of his

people, and stole away from the fight—the fiend have him!—and let the good folk perish there, utterly. They fought all day; they thought that their lord there lay and was by them in their great need. Then took he the way that led toward Hampton, and went toward the haven—most wicked of men—and took all the ships of any value that were there, and all the steersmen for the need of the ships; and journeyed into Cornwall, most wretched of kings in those days. And Arthur besieged Winchester right closely, and slew all the people—there was sorrow enough—the young and the old, all he slew. When the folk was all dead, the town burned up, then he had the walls smashed to bits. Then there came to pass what Merlin had formerly said: “Wretched shalt thou be, Winchester! The earth shall swallow thee!” Thus spoke Merlin, who was a great prophet.

The queen lay at York; never was she so sad; that was Guinevere the queen, fairest of women. She heard true words said, how often Modred fled, and how Arthur pursued him. Woe was to her the while that she was alive. Out of York she went by night, and drew toward Cærlleon, as quickly as she could. There she brought by night two of her knights; and men covered her head with a holy veil, and she was there a nun, saddest of women. Then men knew not of the queen where she had gone, and not for many years after did man truly know whether she were dead or how she had gone away, or whether she herself was drowned in the water.

Modred was in Cornwall and gathered many knights. To Ireland he sent speedily his messengers; to the land of the Saxons he sent speedily his messengers; to Scotland he sent speedily his messengers; he ordered them all to come at once who would have land or silver or gold or possessions or land; in each way he himself warned

every man—so doth each wise man upon whom need cometh.

— Arthur heard, angriest of kings, that Modred was in Cornwall with a huge army, and would wait there until Arthur approached. Arthur sent messengers over all his kingdom, and commanded all who were alive in the land to come, since to fight and to bear arms was good, and whoso refused whom the king commanded, the king would consume in the land, utterly. Innumerable folk came toward the army, on horse and on foot, like the falling rain.

Arthur marched to Cornwall with a huge army. Modred heard of that, and advanced toward him with innumerable folk—many were doomed. By the Tamar they came together, the place called Camelford; ever more the very word shall last. And at Camelford were gathered sixty thousand, and more thousands too. Modred was their leader.

Then thither went Arthur, the mighty, riding, with innumerable folk—doomed though they were. By the Tamar they met; raised their standards; marched together; drew their long swords, and hacked at the helmets. Fire sprang out; spears were shattered; shields began to break; shafts broke in pieces. There fought innumerable folk together. Tamar was in flood with unmeasured blood. There could no man in the fight know any warrior, neither who did worse nor who did better, so confused was the battle. For each slew forthright, were he servant, were he knight. Then was Modred slain and deprived of his life, and all his knights were slain in the fight. There were slain all the bold, Arthur's warriors, high and low, and all the Britons of Arthur's board, and all his followers of many kingdoms. And Arthur was grievously wounded with a broad battle-spear; fifteen fearful wounds he had; in the

smallest one might thrust two gloves. Then no more remained in the fight of two hundred thousand men who lay there hewn in pieces, except Arthur the king alone, and two of his knights.

—Arthur was sorely wounded. Then there came to him a youth who was one of his kin; he was Cador's son, the earl of Cornwall; Constantine the youth was called, and he was dear to the king. Arthur, as he lay on the ground, looked at him, and said these words with heavy heart: "Constantine, thou art welcome; thou wert Cador's son. I bequeath thee here my kingdom, and guard thou my Britons—ever unto thy life's end, and maintain all the laws that have stood in my days, and all the good laws that stood in Uther's day. And I will fare to Avalon, to the fairest of all maidens—to Argante the queen, an elf most beautiful, and she shall make all my wounds sound, make me whole with healing draughts. And afterwards I shall come to my kingdom, and dwell with the Britons in great bliss."

Even as he spoke there came from the sea a short boat, urged on by the waves, and two women therein, wondrously formed. And they took Arthur anon, and bore him quickly and laid him softly down, and departed.

Then did it come to pass what Merlin had formerly said, that great sadness would come from Arthur's departure. The Britons believe yet that he is alive and dwells in Avalon with the fairest of all elves; and the Britons ever expect that Arthur will return. Was never the man born, chosen ever by any lady, that truly knows how to tell more of Arthur. But formerly there was a sage called Merlin; he said—his sayings were true—that Arthur should yet come to help the English.

BESTIARY

THE LION'S NATURE

THE lion stands on a hill. And when he hears man hunting, or by the smell in his nose scents him near, by whatever way he wishes he goes down to the valley. All his footsteps he fills after him; he drags dust with his tail as he steps down, either dust or dew, so that he cannot be found. He pushes on down to his den where he will hide himself.

Another habit he has. When he is born, the lion lies still, does not stir out of sleep, until the sun has shone three times about him. Then his father arouses him with the noise that he makes.

The lion has a third habit: when he lies down to sleep he never closes the lids of his eyes.

SIGNIFICATION

High indeed is that hill, the kingdom of heaven. Our Lord is the lion who dwells there above. Just how it pleased him to light on earth may devil never know, be he ever so keen a hunter, how he came down, and how he took up his dwelling in that sweet maiden, Mary by name, who bore him as man.

When our Lord was dead, and buried as he wished, in a stone he lay still until the third day came. His father helped him so that he arose then from the dead to preserve us for life. He waked according to his will, as a shepherd for his flock. He is the shepherd, we are sheep. He will shield us if we hearken to his word and never go astray.

THE WHALE'S NATURE

The whale is a fish, the greatest that is in the water. This you would say if you saw it when it floated, that it is an island that rests on the strand. This fish is huge,) and when he is hungry he gapes wide. Out of his throat he sends a breath, the sweetest thing on earth. Therefore other fish draw near him; when they feel it they are happy. They come and hover in his mouth; of his trickery they know nothing. This whale then closes his jaws, these fish he sucks in. The small he will thus deceive; the great he may not seize.

This fish lives on the bottom of the sea and lives there ever hale and sound until the time comes that a storm stirs up the sea, when summer and winter fight. He may not live down there, so troubled is the bottom of the sea; and he cannot live there at that time. But he rises up and lies still. While the weather is so ill to the ships that are driven on the sea, loath is death and dear is life. They look about and see this fish—an island they think it is. Therefore they are very glad and with their might they draw toward it, fasten the ship and all climb up. They begin to make a bright fire from stone and steel and tinder on this wonder, and warm themselves and eat and drink. The fire he feels and makes them sink, for (soon) he dives down to the bottom. He destroys them all without a wound.

SIGNIFICATION

This devil is great with will and might, such as witches have in their power. He causes men to hunger and be thirsty, and to have many other sinful lusts. He draws men to him with his breath; whoso follows
entices

him finds disgrace. They are the ones of little faith; the great he may not draw to him. The great, I mean the steadfast in right belief regarding body and spirit. Whoever listens to devil's lore in the end shall sorely rue. Whoever fastens his hope on him shall follow him to dim hell.

c. 1225 (?)

SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE (d. 1372?)

THE VOYAGE AND TRAVEL

FROM THE PROLOGUE—ON HIMSELF

I, JOHN MANDEVILLE, knight, albeit I be not worthy, that was born in England in the town of Saint Albans, passed the sea, in the year of our Lord Jesus Christ 1322, on Saint Michael's Day; and have been a long time over the sea, and have seen and gone through many diverse lands and many provinces and kingdoms and isles, and have passed through Tartary, Persia, Armenia the little and the great; through Lybia, Chaldea, and a great part of Ethiopia; through the land of the Amazons, India the less and the more, a great part, and throughout many other isles that are about India, where dwell many diverse folks of diverse manners and laws, and of diverse shapes of men. Of which lands and isles I shall speak more plainly hereafter. And I shall describe to you some part of the things that are there, when time shall be after it may best come to my mind, and especially for them that will and are in purpose to visit the holy city of Jerusalem, and the holy places thereabout. And I shall tell the way, that they may keep to it thither. For I have often times passed and

ridden over the way with good company of many lords; God be thanked!

And you shall understand that I have put this book out of Latin into French, and translated it again out of French into English, that every man of my nation may understand it. But lords and knights and other noble and worthy men who know Latin but little and have been beyond the sea know and understand, if I err in describing, for forgetting, or else, that they may redress it and amend it. For things passed out of long time from a man's mind or from his sight turn soon into forgetting, because the mind of man may not be comprehended or withholden, for the frailty of mankind.

(Having described to the reader the way from England to Constantinople, and various places in the Holy Land, the author calls the attention of the reader to various marvels.)

THE DRY TREE

And two miles from Hebron is the grave of Lot, that was Abraham's brother. And a little from Hebron is the Mount of Mambre, of the which the valley taketh its name. And there is a tree of oak that the Saracens call *dirp*, that is of Abraham's time, the which men call the *dry tree*. And they say that it hath been there since the beginning of the world, and was some time green and bore leaves, unto the time that our Lord died on the Cross, and then it dried; and so did all the trees that were then in the world. And some say, by their prophecies, that a lord and prince of the west side of the world shall win the Land of Promise, that is the Holy Land, with help of Christian men; and he shall have sung a mass under that tree, and then the tree shall wax green and bear both fruit and leaves. And

through that miracle many Saracens and Jews shall be turned to Christian faith. And therefore they do great worship thereto, and keep it full busily. And albeit so, that it be dry, nevertheless it beareth great virtue; for certainly he that hath a tittle thereof upon him, it healeth him of the falling evil, and his horse shall not be afoundered. And many other virtues it hath, wherefore men hold it full precious.

THE FIELD ENFLOWERED

From Hebron men go to Bethlehem in half a day, for it is but five miles. Bethlehem is a little city, long and narrow and well walled, and on each side enclosed with good ditches.—And toward the east end of the city is a full fair church and a gracious; and it hath many towers, pinnacles, and corners, full strong and curiously made, and within that church are forty-four pillars of marble, great and fair. And between the city and the church is the Field Enflowered. For a fair maiden was blamed with wrong and slandered—for which cause she was doomed to the death, and to be burned in that place, to which she was led. And as the fire began to burn about her she made her prayers to our Lord, that as she truly was not guilty of that sin he would help her, and make it known to all men of his merciful grace. And when she had thus said, she entered into the fire; and at once was the fire quenched and out. And the brands that were burning became red roses; and the brands that were not kindled became white roses. And these were the first rosebushes and roses, both white and red, that ever any man saw. And thus was this maiden saved by the grace of God. And therefore is that field called the Field of God Enflowered, for it was full of roses.

THE DEAD SEA

And from Jericho, a three mile, is the Dead Sea. The water of that sea is full bitter and salt, and if the earth were made moist and wet with that water it would never bear fruit. And the earth and the land change often their color. And it casteth out of the water a thing that men call asphalt; also great pieces, as the greatness of a horse, every day and on all sides.—It is called the Dead Sea, for it runneth not, but is ever immovable. And neither man, beast, nor anything that beareth life in him may die in that Sea; and that hath been proved many times by men who deserved to die, who had been cast therein, and left therein three days or four, and they could never die therein; for it receiveth nothing within itself that beareth life. And no man drinketh of the water for bitterness. And if a man cast iron therein it will float above. And if men cast a feather therein, it will sink to the bottom; and these things are against nature. And also the cities that were lost, because of sin. And there beside grow trees that bear full fair apples, and fair of color to behold; but whoso breaketh them or cutteth them in two, he shall find within them coals and cinders, in token that, by the wrath of God, the cities and the land were burned and sunk into hell.

ON DIAMONDS

And in the land of Macedonia men find diamonds also. But the best and most precious are in India. And men find many times hard diamonds in a mass that cometh out of gold, when men purify it and refine it from the mine; men break that mass into small pieces. And

some times it happeneth that men find some as great as peas, and some less; and they are as hard as those of India. And albeit that men find good diamonds in India, nevertheless men find them more commonly upon the rocks in the sea and upon hills where the mine of gold is. And they grow many of them together, one little, another great. And there are some of the greatness of a bean, and some as great as a hazel nut. And they are square and pointed of their own nature, both above and beneath, without working of man's hand. And they grow together, male and female. And they are nourished with the dew of heaven. And they conceive and bring forth small children, who multiply and grow all the year. I have often times proved that if a man keep them with a little of the rock and wet them with May dew very often, they will grow every year, and the small will wax great. For just as the fine pearl congealeth and waxeth great of the dew of heaven, right so doth the very diamond; and just as the pearl of its own nature taketh roundness, right so the diamond, by virtue of God, taketh squareness. And men should carry the diamond on their left side; for it is of greater virtue then than on the right side. For the strength of their growing is toward the north, that is the left side of the world; and the left part of man is when he turneth his face to the east. And if you like to know the virtues of the diamonds (as men may find in the *Lapidary*, which many men know not at all) I shall tell you, as they beyond the sea say and affirm, from whom come all science and philosophy. He that beareth the diamond upon him, it giveth him hardness and manhood, and it keepeth the limbs of his body whole. It giveth him victory over his enemies, in play and in war, if his cause be rightful. And it keepeth him that beareth it in good wit, and it keepeth him from strife and riot,

from sorrows and enchantments and from phantasies and illusions of wicked spirits. And if any cursed witch or enchanter would bewitch him that beareth the diamond, all that sorrow and mischance shall turn to himself, through virtue of that stone. And also no wild beast dare assail the man that beareth it on him. Also the diamond should be given freely, without coveting and without begging, and then it is of greater virtue. And it maketh a man stronger and more sad against his enemies. And it healeth him that is lunatic, and him that the Fiend pursueth or travaileth. And if venom or poison be brought into the presence of the diamond, at once it beginneth to wax moist and to sweeten—.

OF THE PEPPER TREES IN THE ORIENT

And you shall understand that the pepper groweth in manner as doth a wild vine that is planted fast by the trees of that wood for to sustain it by, as doth the vine. And the fruit thereof hangeth in the manner of raisins. And the tree is so thickly laden that it seemeth that it would break. And when it is ripe it is all green as though it were ivy berries. And then men cut them, as men do vines, and then they put them upon an oven, and there they wax black and crisp. And there are three manners of pepper, all upon one tree: long pepper, black pepper, and white pepper. The long pepper men call *sorbotyn*; and the black pepper is called *fulfulle*, and the white pepper is called *bano*. The long pepper cometh first, when the leaf beginneth to come, and it is like the flowers of the hazel that come before the leaf and hang low. And after cometh the black with the leaf in the manner of clusters of raisins, all green; and when men have gathered it, then come the white, which is somewhat less than the black; and of that men bring

but little into this country, for they beyond withholden it for themselves, for it is more attempered by nature than is the black. In that country are many kinds of serpents and other vermin, for the great heat of the sun and of the pepper. And some men say that when they will gather the pepper, they make a fire and burn about to make the serpents to flee. But save their grace of all that say so! For if they burned about the trees that bear, the pepper should be burned, and it would dry up all the virtue, as of any other thing; and then they would do themselves much harm, and they could never quench the fire. But thus they do: they anoint their hands and their feet with a juice made of snails and of other things made therefore, of which the serpents and the venomous beasts hate and dread the savor; and that maketh them flee before them because of the smell, and then they gather it safely enough.

SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

AFTER the siege and the assault had ceased at Troy, the city destroyed and burned to ashes, the warrior who wrought there his tricks of treason was tried for his treachery, the truest on earth. This was Æneas the noble; he and his noble kindred afterwards conquered provinces and became the patrons of well nigh all the wealth of the Western Isles. For rich Romulus betakes himself to Rome; with great pride he at once builds that city, and bestows on it his name, which it now has; Ticius turns to Tuscany and establishes dwellings; Longobard in Lombardy raises homes; and, far over the French flood, Felix Brutus joyfully founds Britain on many banks full broad, where war and waste and wonder have been at times, and often bliss has given way to woe.

And when this Britain was founded by this powerful man, bold men increased therein who loved strife, and many a time worked woe. More remarkable things have taken place in this land than in any other that I know of, and since that time; but of all the British kings who built here, ever was Arthur the most gracious, as I have heard tell. And so I plan to reveal an adventure on earth, which some men consider most strange and, even among the adventures of Arthur, extraordinary. If you will listen to this lay but a little while, I shall tell it straightway as I heard it in town, as it is written down in story fixed and settled, told long ago in the land with true words.

The king dwelt royally at Camelot at Christmas tide, with many splendid lords, best of warriors, all the rich brethren of the Round Table, with exceeding rich revel and unrestrained mirth. There full many warriors tourneyed at times, jousted full gaily these gentle knights, returned afterwards to the court to carol. For there the feast was continued full fifteen days, with all the meat and the mirth that men could think of. Such riotous glee glorious to hear, a merry din by day, dancing at night. All was unfettered joy in halls and chambers with lords and ladies as pleased them best. With all the wealth in the world they dwelt there together, the most renowned warriors under Christ himself, and the loveliest ladies that ever have lived, and the comeliest king, he who holds court. For all this fair folk in the hall were in the springtime of life, the happiest under heaven with the most resolute of kings. It would be very difficult to name so great a lord anywhere.

When New Year was young and but newly come, the court was served double on the high dais, for the king had come with his knights into the hall when the chanting at the chapel had come to an end. Loud cry

was raised there by clerks and others, Noel celebrated anew, mentioned full often; and afterwards the powerful ones ran about to take New Year tokens, called loudly for gifts, bestowed them out of hand, debated busily about the gifts. Ladies laughed full loudly, though they had lost, and he who won was not angry, that may you well trust. All this mirth they made until meal-time. When they had washed, worthily they went to their seats, the best warrior ever above, as was most fitting. Guinevere, resplendent, was placed in the midst, set on the rich dais ornamented all about. No man could truly say that he ever saw a fairer lady with her sparkling bright eyes.

But Arthur would not eat until all were served. He was merry in his mirth, indeed like a child; his life pleased him well; he loved but little either to lie long or to sit long, so did his young blood and his wild brain busy him. And another custom moved him, too, which he through chivalry had adopted: he would never eat upon such a precious day before he was told some strange tale of adventure, of some great marvel that he could believe, of his ancestors, of arms, and of other adventures; or unless some person besought him for a trusty knight to join with him in jousting, to risk danger, stake life against life, trusting each in the other, as fortune would favor them. This was the king's habit when he held court, at each goodly feast with his free company in the hall. Therefore with valiant mien he strides boldly to his seat, full early on that New Year, making great mirth with all.

A noise full suddenly drew near, for hardly had the music ceased for a while, and the first course in the court been fittingly served, than there broke in at the hall door a terrible creature, the tallest of men on earth; from neck to loin so square and so thick, and his loins

and his limbs so long and so great that I thought he was half giant. Men marveled at the color of his face; he carried himself in hostile manner, and over all was bright green.

He had neither helmet nor hauberk, nor gorget, nor armor, no spear and no shield to smite and to guard, but in his one hand he had a holly twig that is brightest in its green when groves are bare, and an axe in the other, a huge and enormous one, a weapon merciless, impossible to describe in story.

This hero enters the hall, riding straight to the high dais, fearless of danger. He greeted never a one, but looked loftily around, and the first word that he spoke was: "Where is," he said, "the governor of this company? Gladly I would see that warrior and converse with him."

Then Arthur before the high dais beheld that adventurer and royally addressed him, for never was he afraid, and said, "Sir, welcome indeed to this place. I am called Arthur, the head of this hostel. Alight courteously down and stay, I beg, and what your desire is we shall know hereafter."

"Nay, so help me he who sits on high," quoth the warrior. "To dwell any time in this dwelling was not my errand; but because the fame of this people is lifted up so high, and this city and these warriors are reckoned the best, boldest under armor riding on steeds, the strongest and the worthiest of this world's kind, and tried opponents in other fitting sports; and here courtesy is known, as I have heard tell—all this has attracted me hither, beyond a doubt, at this time. You may be sure by this branch which I bear here that I pass in peace and seek no trouble; for if I had traveled with a company in fighting array, I have a hauberk at home and a helmet both, a shield, and a sharp spear

shining bright, and other weapons to wield, I know full well. But since I desired not war, my clothing is softer. Now if you be as bold as all men tell, thou wilt grant me courteously the sport that I ask."

Arthur knew how to reply, and said, "Sir courteous knight, if thou cravest battle, thou shalt not want of a fight here."

"Nay, I demand no fight. In faith I tell thee there are but beardless children on this bench. If I were buckled in armor on a high steed, there is no man here who could match me, their might is so weak. Therefore I crave in this court a Christmas game, for it is Yule and New Year, and here are many brave ones. If any one in this house holds himself so hardy, is so bold in his blood, reckless, that he dares stoutly strike one stroke for another, I shall give him as my gift this gisarm, this axe, which is heavy enough, to handle as he pleases; and I shall await the first blow, as bare as I sit. If any warrior be bold enough to accept my challenge, let him leap lightly to me and take this weapon—I yield it forever, let him keep it as his own—and I shall stand him a stroke, resolutely on this floor. At another time thou wilt permit me to give him another stroke, by our Lady. I shall give him respite of a twelvemonth and a day. Now hasten, and let it be seen quickly whether any one herein dare say aught."

"Warrior," said King Arthur, "thine asking is foolish, by heaven; and as thou hast asked for folly, it behooves thee to find it. I know no man that is afraid of thy words. Give me now thine axe, for God's sake, and I shall grant the boon which thou hast asked."

Lightly he leaped to him and caught at his hand. Then fiercely the other alights on foot. Now Arthur has his axe, and grips the handle, and whirls it sternly about as though he meant to strike. The brave man

stood upright before him, taller than any one in the house by a head and more; with bold mien he stood there, stroked his beard, and dauntlessly drew down his coat, no more fearfully or dismayed for Arthur's mighty strokes than if some one had brought him a drink of wine upon the bench.

Gawain, who sat by the queen, bent over to the king: "I beseech now in all courtesy that this affair be mine. Would ye, worthy lord," quoth Gawain to the king, "bid me move from this bench and stand by you there, I would come to your aid before your rich court; for methinks it is without a doubt unseemly that such a request is made so much of in your hall, though ye yourself be willing to undertake it, while so many bold ones sit about you on the bench. I am the weakest, I know, and the feeblest of wit, and there would be the less loss of my life, to tell the truth. And since this adventure is so foolish, it befits not you; and I have asked it of you first, grant it to me. If I have not spoken well, let all this court answer."

Then the king commanded the knight to rise; and he full readily arose, and prepared himself, kneeled down before the king and took the weapon. Arthur lovingly left it to him, lifted up his hand and gave him God's blessing, and gladly bade him be bold in both heart and hand. "Watch out, cousin, that thou cuttest him, and if thou treatest him right, I readily believe that thou shalt bear the blow which he will offer after."

Gawain goes to the man with axe in hand; and he boldly awaits him, by no means afraid. Then speaks to Sir Gawain the knight in green: "Let us rehearse our compact ere we farther go. First I ask thee, warrior, what thy name is, that thou tell me truly that I may believe it."

"In good faith," quoth the good knight, "Gawain am

I called, who give you this buffet, whatever befalls after; and at this time twelvemonth I am to take from thee another with whatever weapon thou wilt, and from no one else alive."

The other answers again, "Sir Gawain, so may I thrive, I am right glad that thou wilt give me this blow. Thou shalt seek me thyself, wherever thou thinkest I may be found on earth, and fetch for thyself such wages as thou dealest me today before this rich following."

"Where should I seek thee?" quoth Gawain. "Where is thy place?"

"New Year will be early enough for that; no more is needed now," quoth the man in green to Gawain the courteous. "But to tell the truth, after I have stood thy tap, and thou valiantly hast smitten me, at once I shall tell you of my house and home and my own name. Then thou mayest ask about my journey and keep the agreement. And if I spend no speech, then thou wilt speed the better, for thou mayest tarry in thy land and quest no farther. Take now thy grim tool to thee, and let us see how thou knockest."

"Gladly, sir, in sooth," quoth Gawain; his axe he strokes.

The green knight on the ground rightly prepares himself. He bowed his head a little, uncovered the flesh. His long, lovely locks he laid over the crown, and let the naked neck show for the axe. Gawain gripped his axe and gathered it on high, set left foot before him on the ground, and let the axe light keenly on the naked neck so that the sharp blade severed the huge one's bones and bit through the bright flesh and severed it in two, and the edge of the brown steel bit into the ground. The fair head fell from the neck to the earth and many pushed it about with their feet where it rolled forth.

The blood spurted from the body and shone on the green. Yet never faltered nor fell the bold one for that, but bravely he started up with stout legs, fiercely rushed out where the heroes stood, seized his lovely head and lifted it up straightway. Then he turned to his steed, caught the bridle, stepped into the steel bow and strode aloft, holding in his hand the head by the hair; and as calmly the man sat in his saddle as though no mishap had befallen him, though headless he was on the spot. He turned his trunk about, that ugly bleeding body. Many a one of them thought that he had lost his reason.

For the head in his hand he held up straight, toward the highest on the dais he turned the face; and it lifted up the eyelids and looked straight forth, and announced thus much with its mouth, as ye may now hear: "Look, Gawain, that thou be ready to go as thou hast agreed, and quest loyally, hero, until thou find me, as thou hast agreed to in this hall and in the hearing of these knights. To the green chapel go thou, I charge thee; such a blow as thou hast dealt shalt thou receive, promptly given on New Year's morn. Many men know me, the knight of the green chapel; therefore thou wilt never fail to find me, if thou tryest. Wherefore come, or it behooves thee to be called recreant."

In a wild rout he turned the reins, and burst out at the hall door, his head in his hand, so that the fire of the flint flew from the foal's hoofs. To what nation he went knew none there; no more than they knew whence he had come. The king and Gawain there laughed and grinned at that green man; yet this event was considered a marvel among men.

Now rides this warrior, Sir Gawain, through the realm of Logres on God's behalf, though it seemed no game to him. Often alone he put up at night in places where he found not before him the fare that he liked.

No companion had he but his foal by woods and downs, and no one but God to talk with on the way; and finally he approached nigh unto North Wales. And ever as he traveled he inquired from men whom he met if they had heard any talk of a green knight in any place there about, of a green chapel; and all answered him with nay, that never in their lives saw they a man of such green hue. The knight took strange paths by many a rough bank. His cheer changed full often ere he saw that chapel. He blessed himself many a time and said, "The cross of Christ speed me."

The warrior had not crossed himself more than three times ere he was aware in the wood of a castle dwelling, on a hill and hidden under boughs. Then he arouses Gringolet with his gold spurs and full luckily chooses the way to the main road, which quickly brought the hero to the bridge-end in haste. He called, and soon there came a porter right pleasant who from the wall took his message and greeted the knight errant.

"Good sir," quoth Gawain, "wouldest thou go on my errand to the high lord of this house to crave lodging?"

"Yea, by Peter," quoth the porter, "and verily I trow that ye are welcome, sir, to tarry while you please."

Then went that man quickly again and people thronging about him to receive the knight. They let down the great draw and eagerly rushed out, and kneeled down upon the cold earth to welcome this warrior as seemed to them fitting. They yielded to him the broad gate and opened it wide, and he raised them courteously and rode over the bridge. Then the lord of the people came from his chamber to greet courteously the man on the floor. He said, "Ye are welcome to wield as you like what is here; all is your own to have according to your will and your dictate." "Gramercy," quoth Ga-

wain, "May Christ reward you for it." Like heroes that seemed glad either folded the other in his arms.

The lord led the way to a chamber and quickly ordered a retinue for Gawain, to serve him in humble manner; and there were ready at his command men enough, who brought him to a bright bower where the bedding was curtains of pure silk with pure gold hems, and covertures most curious with comely panes enriched above with bright fur. There with mirthful speeches he was despoiled of his armor and of his bright garments. Rich robes full quickly the warriors brought him, that he might select and choose the best for his change. As soon as he took one and clothed himself therewith, that sat upon him seemly with sailing skirts, the hero by his visage verily seemed well-nigh to every man in appearance glowing and lovely in all his limbs; it seemed to them that Christ never made a comelier knight.

A chair before the fireplace where charcoal burned was set for Sir Gawain, made comfortable with cloths and cushions, and hassocks that were fine. And then a rich mantle was cast about the man of a brown cloth richly embroidered and fairly furred within with skins of the best, all of ermine, the hood of the same. And he sat on that settle richly arrayed and warmed himself quite, and then his cheer mended. Soon was raised up a table on trestles most fair, covered with a clean cloth that showed pure white, napkins, salt-cellar, and silver spoons. The warrior washed at his will, and went to his meat. Men served him fittingly enough with various stews and suitable, seasoned in the best way, double portions, and many kinds of fish, some baked in bread, some broiled on the coals, some boiled, some stewed, savored with spices, and always speech so delightful that it pleased the warrior.

Then they spied out and questioned, in a sparing manner, put gentle questions to the prince himself, until he told them courteously of what court he was, that noble Arthur the gracious retained him, he who is the rich, royal king of the Round Table, and that it was Gawain himself who sits in that house, arrived at Christmas tide as chance favored him. When the lord learned that he had that hero, loudly he laughed, so dear it seemed to him; and all the men in the castle made such joy at appearing suddenly in the presence of him to whom pertains all honor and prowess and courteous manners, and ever is praised. Beyond all the men in the world his fame is the greatest.

When the dinner was done and the dear ones had stood up, time had advanced nigh to the night. Chaplains led the way to the chapel, rang full strongly just as they should, to the devout even-song of the high time. The lord turns thither and the lady also. Into a comely closet fairly she enters. Gawain gladly advances and goes thither at once. The lord takes him by the hand and leads him to a seat, recognizes him familiarly and calls him by name, and says he is the welcomest man in the world. Gawain thanked him fully, and either embraced the other, and they sat soberly together throughout the service. Then desired the lady to look on the knight. She came from her closet with many fair maidens. She was the fairest of skin, of flesh and complexion, in stature and color and virtues superior to all others, and fairer than Guinevere, as the hero thought. He advanced through the chancel to address the beautiful one. Another lady led her by the hand, that was older than she, ancient she seemed, and highly honored by the knights about; but unlike to look on were the ladies, for if the younger was fair, yellow was the other.

Rich red on the one spread everywhere, rough wrinkled cheeks rolled on the other.

When Gawain gazed on that beautiful one who looked so gracious, he took leave of the lord and went toward them. The elder he saluted, bowing full low; the lovelier he took a little in his arms; he kissed her comely and knightly addressed her.

At the proper time the king commanded lights; Sir Gawain took his leave and went to his bed.

On the morn, on which as every man knows, the Lord was born to die for our destiny, happiness waxes in every dwelling in the world, for His sake. So did there on that day, with many dainties at meat and at meals, dishes full quaint, and bold men on the dais dressed in the best. Much pleasure was enjoyed that day and the next, and the third as quickly crowded in thereafter. The lord tried hard to hold the knight longer; to him Gawain answers that he can in no wise. Then the lord asked him full fairly what remarkable deed had driven him at that dear time so boldly to travel all alone from the king's court ere the holidays were wholly past. "For sooth," quoth the warrior, "ye say but the truth; a high errand and a hasty took me from these dwellings, for I myself am summoned to such a place I know not in the world whither to turn to find it. For all the land in Logres I would not fail to find it on New Year's morn, so help me our Lord. Therefore, sir, this request I require of you here, that you tell me in truth if ever ye heard tale of the green chapel, where on earth it stands, and of the knight of the color of green who keeps it. There was established by statute a compact between us, that I should meet that man at the appointed place, if I could last. And of that same New Year but little is wanting, and if God would let me I would gladlier look on that man, by God's son, than control any wealth. Therefore,

certes, by your good will, it behooves me to go; I have now but barely three days for my business, and I would as soon fall dead as fail in my errand."

Then, laughing, quoth the lord, "Now it behooves thee to tarry, for I shall show you the way to that place by the time's end—the green chapel upon the ground—and grieve you no more. Dwell here until New Year's day, and rise and go then. One shall set you on the way; it is not two miles hence."

Then was Gawain full glad, and joyfully he laughed: "Now I thank you for this above all other things, that my quest is achieved. I shall dwell at your will and do whatever else you conclude."

"Ye shall tarry in your loft and lie at your ease tomorrow until mass-time; and go to meat, when ye will, with my wife, who shall sit with you and comfort you with her company until I return to court. Tarry you here, and I shall rise early, a-hunting will I go." Gawain grants all this, bowing courteously.

"Yet further," quoth the warrior, "let us make an agreement. Whatsoever I win in the wood belongs to you, and whatever fortune ye achieve, exchange with me therefor. Sweet sir, swap we so, swear truthfully, whether one of us gets the worse or the better."

"By God," quoth Gawain the good, "I agree to that, and whatever you wish to play at seems pleasing to me."

Full early before day the folk arose. The guests who would go called their grooms and they hurried to saddle the horses, prepare their outfits, and truss their mails. The dear lord of the land was not the last, arrayed for the riding with full many followers. He ate a sop hastily when he had heard mass, hied quickly to field with his bugle. By the time that daylight shone on the earth, he with his heroes were on their high horses. Then these hunters who knew how coupled their

hounds, opened the kennel doors and called them out, blew merrily on bugles three plain notes.

Thus sports this lord by the edge of the linden wood, and Gawain the good man lies in his gay bed, rests until daylight shines on the walls, under covers most beautiful, curtained about. And as he slid into a slumber, faintly he heard a little din at his door, and then clearly; and he lifted up his head out of the clothes, caught up a corner of his curtain a little, and looked warily in that direction to see what it might be. It was the lady, loveliest to behold, who drew the door to after her softly and quietly, and went toward the bed. The hero was modest and laid himself down slyly and made believe that he slept. And she stept quietly and stole to his bed, cast up the curtain, and crept within, and sat down full softly on the bedside, and stayed there wondrously long to see when he should awake. The man lay hiding a full long while, troubled in his conscience what this case might mean or amount to; marvellous it seemed to him. But yet he said to himself, "More seemly it were to learn by speaking what she would." Then he waked and stretched, and turning to her, unlocked his eyelids, and let on he was surprised, and crossed himself with his hand to be the safer for his prayer. With chin and cheek full sweet, both white and red combined, full lovely she seemed, with her small laughing lips.

"Good morning, Sir Gawain!" said that fair lady. "Ye are a careless sleeper when one can slip in hither. Now are ye without doubt taken; unless we can make a truce, I shall bind you in your bed, be sure of that." All laughingly the lady threw out these jests.

Thus they spoke of this and that till past mid-morn, and ever the lady acted as though she loved him much. But the hero was on the defensive and acted most

courteously. "Though I were the most beautiful of women," thought the lady to herself, "the less love would I have from him because of the adventure which he seeks straightway, the blow that shall destroy him, and which needs be done." The lady then spoke of leaving, which he granted at once. Then quoth Gawain, "In sooth, let it be as pleases you, I shall kiss at your commandment as befits a knight." She comes nearer with that and takes him in her arms, bends sweetly down and kisses the man. They debonairly entrust each other to Christ; she goes forth at the door, without any more noise. He gets ready to rise and hurries, calls his chamberlain, chooses his garments, goes forth blithely, when he is ready, to mass.

And ever the lord of the land is kept to his sport, hunting in holt and heath at barren hinds. Such a sum of does and of other animals he slew there by the time the sun had set was a wonder to count.

Then the lord summoned all his following into the hall, and both the ladies to descend with their maids. Before all the folk on the floor he ordered men to bring his venison before him, and all in good sport he called Gawain, told him the number of the fine beasts, shows him the rich meat cut from the ribs. "How suits you this play? Have I won the prize?"

"Yes, indeed," quoth the other man, "here is the finest heap that I have seen this seven year in the winter season."

"And all I give to you, Gawain," quoth the man then, "for by our covenant you can crave it as your own."

"That is truth," quoth the warrior, "I say to you the same. I have worthily won within this thing, and as certainly with just as good will it belongs to you." He clasps his fair neck in his arms, and kisses him as

courteously as he knew how. "Take there my merchandise. I have gained no more; I should give it up readily if it were more."

"It is good," quoth the good man, "gramercy for it. Perhaps it would be better if you told me where you won this same wealth by your own wit."

"That was not the compact," quoth he, "ask me no more, for you have taken all that belongs to you, trust that."

They laughed and were blithe in gentle tones; to supper they went quickly, with new dainties enough.

And afterwards as they sat by the fireplace, servants poured often for them the rare wines; and again in their joking way they concluded to make in the morning the same agreement that they had already made, whatever fortune might be, to exchange their gains, whatever new that they won, when they met. Then finally they took leave courteously, and everyone hurried to bed.

By the time that the cock had crowed and cackled thrice, the lord had jumped from his bed, and all of his retainers too, so that the meat and the mass were quickly finished, the company prepared for hunting in the wood, before daylight. With hunters and horns they coursed over the plains, and uncoupled the hounds that raced through the thorns.

With this sport they thus drive on the day, while our lovely hero lies in his bed, Gawain comfortably at home, in garments full rich of hue. The lady did not forget; she came to greet him; full early she was beside him to change his mind.

She comes to the curtain and peeks at the knight. Sir Gawain straightway welcomes her honorably, and she pays it back to him at once, most ardent in her words, seats herself softly by his side, laughs boldly, and

with a lovely look speaks these words to him: "Sir, if ye be Gawain, it is a wonder to me that a man who is always so well disposed to good does not follow the etiquette of society, and that after becoming acquainted with a person ye cast her from your mind. Thou hast already forgotten what I taught thee yesterday by the very truest speech that I knew."

"What is that?" quoth the man. "Indeed I know not. If it be the truth ye speak, the blame is mine."

"But I taught thee about kissing," quoth the lady then; "wherever a countenance is known, to claim quickly; that becomes a knight who acts courteously."

"Hush, my dear, such speech," quoth the stern man. "I dare not do that lest I be denied. If I offered and were refused, I should certainly be wrong if I proffered."

"By my faith," quoth the beautiful lady, "ye cannot be refused. Ye are strong enough to constrain it by strength, if you liked, granted that any one was so discourteous as to deny you."

"I am at your commandment to kiss when you please," quoth he. "Ye may begin when ye list, and leave off when ye wish."

The lady bends down and prettily kisses his face. Much they there have of the fears and pleasures of love.

(The lord of the castle returns from the hunt.)

"Now, Gawain," quoth the good man, "this game is your own, by our strict agreement, certainly you know."

"It is true," quoth the hero, "and as certainly all my gain I shall yield to you, by my troth." He embraced the warrior about the neck and courteously kissed him, and a second time he served him likewise.

"Now we are even," quoth the warrior, "this night of all the covenants that we made by law since I came hither."

The lord said, "By Saint Giles, ye are the best that I know! Ye will be rich in a while, if ye drive such bargains."

And there they drank and conversed, and proposed again the same procedure for New Year's Eve. Drink was speedily brought to them, and they went to bed, with lights. Sir Gawain lay and slept full still and softly all night. The lord, who was mindful of his craft, was dressed full early. After mass he and his men took a morsel. Merry was the morning. He asks for his mount, and all the men who should hunt with him were ready on horseback. Most fair was the field, for the frost stayed on.

But the lady for love wished not to sleep or cease from the purpose that dwelt in her heart; but up she rose quickly and went thither in a gay mantle reaching to the ground, and furred full fine with rich skins. "Ah man, how can you sleep, this morning is so clear!" Though he was deeply drowsing, still he could hear her. He welcomed her worthily with good cheer; much joy they had. Great peril stood between them, if Mary was not mindful of her knight. He was careful of etiquette, lest he be gross; and thought of the evil if he should sin, and be a traitor to the lord who owned the castle. "God shield," quoth the warrior, "that shall not befall." With a little playfulness he turned aside all the meaningful speeches that sprang from her mouth. Sighing she bent down and kissed him seemly, and then she withdrew from him and said as she stood, "Now, dear, at this departing, do me this comfort, give me something as a gift, thy glove perhaps, that I may remember thee, to lessen my mourning."

"Now, in truth," quoth the knight, "I would I had here for thy love the dearest thing that I own. But to exchange with you for love, that would gain but little."

"Now, courteous and most honorable one," quoth that most lovely lady, "though I shall have naught of yours ye shall have of mine."

She handed him a rich ring of red gold work, with a glittering stone standing aloft, which there blushing beams like the bright sun. But the warrior refused it, and readily he said, "I wish no valuable gifts, my gay one, at this time; I have none to give you, and naught will I take." And she was sorry that he refused, and said, "If ye refuse my ring, because it seems too rich, I shall give you my girdle, that will profit you less." And he consented, and she gave it to him with a good will, and besought him, for her sake, never to reveal it, but to hide it loyally from her lord. The man agreed that never should man know it except them. Full oft he thanked her heartily, right happy in heart and thought. By that she had kissed the brave knight three times. Then she takes her leave and leaves him there, for more mirth from that man she could not get.

The lord alighted at last at his dear home, found fire in the grate, and the hero beside it, Sir Gawain the good, who was glad withal; among the ladies he had much joy in their love. He met this good man in the middle of the floor, joyfully greeted him, and fairly he said, "Now I shall fulfill our covenant that we have lately made, where no drink was spared." Then he embraces the knight, and kisses him thrice, as heartily and as soberly as he knew how. "Mary," quoth that other man, "mine is the poorer, for I have hunted all this day, and naught have I got but this foul fox-skin. The fiend have the good ones! And that is full poor to pay for such fine things as ye have brought me here, three such good kisses."

Then humbly this noble man takes his leave of the lord first, and fairly thanks him, "For such a pleasant

sojourn as I have had here, for the honor at this high feast, the high king reward you! I must needs, as ye know, move on tomorrow, if ye will give me some man, as ye promised, to teach me the way to the green chapel."

"In good faith," quoth the good man, "with a good will. All that ever I promised you I shall perform." Then he assigns him a servant to set him on the way and conduct him by the downs. The lord thanked Gawain for the worship he had granted him. Then the knight took his leave of the fair ladies.

Then he spurs Gringolet, and follows the path. And then he looked about him; wild it seemed to him, and no sign of resting-place anywhere; oft he changed his cheer while looking for the chapel. But soon a little way off he saw a mound, as it were. The knight pushes on with his steed and comes to the mound, alights quickly down, and to a tree ties his rein and his rich bridle by a rough branch. Then he turns to the hill and walks about it, debating with himself what it might be. It had a hole at the end and on either side, and was overgrown with grass in clumps everywhere, and was all hollow within—nothing but an old cave or a crevice of an old crag. He could not understand by any means. "Woe, Lord," quoth the gentle knight, "can this be the green chapel? Here about midnight the devil may tell his matins!"

Then the knight called full high, "Who dwells in this place to hold conference with me?"

"Abide," quoth one on the bank over his head, "and thou shalt have in all haste that which I promised you once." And then he descends by a crag and comes out of a hole, whirling out of a hidden place with a fell weapon—a Danish axe new dight, to give the blow with—four feet long, no less. And the man in the green was dressed as at first, his countenance and his legs,

his locks, and beard, save that on foot he advances fairly on the earth. When he came to the water, where he did not wish to wade, he hopped over on his axe and strode fiercely. Sir Gawain met the knight, and bowed, but not at all low. The other said, "Now, sweet sir, for an appointment a man may trust thee."

Quoth Gawain, "By God that lent me spirit, I shall grudge thee not at all, come whatever evil may. Prepare thyself for one stroke, and I shall stand still and not at all hinder thee from doing as thou likest." He bent his neck and bowed down, and showed the flesh all bare, and acted as though he feared not. For fear he would not tremble.

Then the man in the green prepared himself quickly, gathered up his grim tool to smite Gawain. With all the strength in his body he bore it aloft, and feigned mightily as though he would kill him. Had it driven down as powerfully as he purposed, the ever doughty one had been dead from the blow. But Gawain glanced to one side of the axe as it came gliding down to harm him there in the glade, and shrank a little with his shoulders from the sharp iron. The other warrior quickly withheld the bright weapon, and then reproved the prince with many proud words. "Thou art not Gawain," quoth the man, "who is held so good, who never trembled for any army by hill or by dale; and now thou fleest for fear before thou feelest harm."

Quoth Gawain, "I flinched once, and so will I no more. But if my head should fall on the stones, I cannot restore it."

"Have at thee, then," quoth the other, and heaves it aloft, and aims as fiercely as though he were mad. He strikes at him mightily, but touches not the man, skilfully withheld his hand ere it might hurt. Gawain

awaits it and flinches with no member, but stood still as a stone or a stump that is twisted into the ground with a hundred roots.

Then merrily spoke he again, the man in the green: "Now that thou hast thy heart whole, it behooves me to hit. Hold back thy rich hood that Arthur gave thee, and keep thy neck whole at this blow, if thou canst."

Gawain in great wrath said, "Why, thrash on, thou fierce man! Thou threatenest too long. I think that your own heart grows timid."

"Forsooth," quoth the other warrior, "so boldly thou speakest, I will not hinder thine errand a bit longer." Then he takes his stride to strike and knits both his brow and his lip. No wonder Gawain does not like it and hopes not for escape. He lifts lightly his axe and lets the edge come down fairly on the bare neck. Yet though he struck mightily, it hurt him only a little; just cut him on one side and severed the skin. The sharp edge cut to the flesh through the clear fat, so that the bright blood shot over his shoulders to the earth. And when the warrior saw the blood shine on the snow, he jumped forth more than a spear length, seized quickly his helmet, cast it on his head, thrust his shoulders under his fair shield, drew forth a bright sword, and courageously spoke; never since he was born into this world of his mother was he half so blithe: "Cease, sir, of thy blow. Offer me no more. I have in this place taken a stroke without strife, and if thou givest me more, I readily shall requite thee."

The warrior turned from him, and rested on his axe, set the shaft on the ground, leaned on the head, and saw how the brave man stood his ground valiantly. Then he spoke merrily with a great voice, and with a roaring laugh said to the warrior, "Bold sir, on this

spot be not so fierce. No one here has unmannerly treated you nor acted except according to the agreement made at the king's court. I promised thee a stroke, and thou hast it; hold thee well paid. I release thee of the remnant, of all other rights. If I had been clever, peradventure I could have given thee a heavier blow. First I menaced thee merrily with a feint, and struck thee not, and rightly according to the covenant that we made on the first night, and which thou truly held with me. The other feint this morning I proffered thee because thou didst kiss my fair wife and didst give the kisses to me; for both these times I gave you here two mere feints, without harm. A true man truly restores; he needs dread no evil. At the third time thou didst fail; therefore take that tap. For it is my garment that thou wearest, that very same woven girdle. Mine own wife gave it thee, I know well forsooth. Now know I well thy kisses and thy virtues, too; and the wooing of my wife—I arranged that myself. I sent her to try thee, and truly it seems to me thou art the most faultless knight that ever went on foot. As a pearl is of greater price than white peas, so is Gawain, in good faith, compared with other gay knights. But here you lacked a little, sir, and loyalty was wanting in you."

That other brave man stood a great while in a study; so aggrieved was he that he groaned within. All the blood of the breast shone in his face, so that he shrank for shame while the warrior talked. The first word that the man spoke was this: "Cursed be cowardice and covetousness both! In you is villainy and vice, that destroy virtue." Then he seized the knot and loosed the catch, and bitterly reached the belt to the warrior himself: "Lo, there is the false thing, foul may it fall! I confess to you, knight, that my actions were faulty. Let

me fulfill your wishes now, and afterwards I shall be wary."

Then laughed that other man and courteously said, "I consider it quite recompensed, the harm that I had. Thou hast fully confessed, acknowledged thy misdeeds, and hast received the penance from the point of my sword. I hold thee absolved of that pledge and purified as clean as though thou hadst never forfeited since thou wast born. And I give thee, sir, the girdle that is gold-hemmed. And thou shalt come again to my dwelling this New Year and we shall revel the remnant of this rich feast full well." The lord urged the invitation and said, "With my wife, who was your sure enemy, I ween we shall reconcile you."

"Nay, forsooth," quoth the hero, and seized his helmet, and took it off quickly; he thanked the warrior: "I have sojourned well, may happiness be yours. Commend me to that courteous one, your comely companion, both the one and the other, my honored ladies, who thus with their skill have quaintly beguiled their knight. But it is not strange that a fool should rave and through wiles of women be won to sorrow. For so was Adam on earth beguiled with one, and Solomon by many; and Samson, also, Delilah dealt him his fate; and David thereafter was deceived by Bathsheba, who suffered much sorrow. If I be beguiled now, methinks I might be excused. But your girdle," quoth Gawain, "God reward you for it! That will I hold with a good will; in sign of my fault I shall look on it oft. But one thing I pray you: what is your right name? and then no more."

"That shall I tell thee truly," quoth the other then, "Bernlak de Hautdesert I am called in this land, through the might of Morgen le Fay, who dwells in my house.

She caused me in this wise to go to your rich hall, to test its pride and see if it were true that is rumored of the great renown of the Round Table. She is even thine aunt, Arthur's half sister, the daughter of the Duchess of Tintagel upon whom dear Uther afterwards begot Arthur. Therefore I urge thee, warrior, to come to thine aunt; make merry in my house; my retainers love thee, and I like thee as well, sir, by my faith, as I do any man under God, because of thy great truthfulness."

But Gawain answered him nay, he would by no means. Then they embraced and kissed, entrusted each other to the Prince of Paradise, and they parted right there in the cold. Gawain on his steed rides to the king's court, and the knight all in green wherever he would. And thus he comes to the court, the knight all sound. There wakened happiness in that dwelling when the great ones knew that good Gawain had come; joyous it seemed to them. The king kisses the knight, and the queen does too; and afterwards many a brave knight who sought to embrace him and asked him about his travels. And wondrously he tells his story, revealing all the hardships he had, the happening in the chapel, the conduct of the knight, the amour of the lady, and finally the lace. He showed them the cut in his neck which he had at the lord's hands for his fault. He sorrowed in telling it, and groaned for grief and sorrow; the blood surged to his face for shame when he had to tell it. The king comforts the knight, and all the court does too. They laugh loudly and courteously agree that the lords and the ladies who belong to the Table, each knight of the brotherhood, should have a baldric, a band, about him, of a bright green, and wear that for the sake of the hero. And that was accorded the renown of the Round Table, and he that had it was ever-

more honored, as it is written in the best book of romance.

Now may He who bore the crown of thorns bring us to his bliss! Amen.

HONY SOYT QUI MAL PENCE.

c. 1380

PEARL

I

PEARL, for a prince's pleasance fair enow,
Right cleanly housed in gold so clear,
No orient pearl I dare avow
Was ever yet her precious peer.
So rounded, in such rare array,
So small, of smoothen comeliness,
I judged her of all jewels gay
As singly set in singleness.
Lost in mine harbour,—woe is me!
'Neath earth she with grass o'ergrown,
I mourn love's sweet anxiety
That spotless pearl had made my own.

10

II

There have I tarried oft-times where below
It left my sight, to seek again the joy
That once was wont to scatter all my woe,
And lift my life above the world's annoy.
About my heart do ceaseless sorrows throng,
That constant grief must ever constant be—
Yet, thought I, never was so sweet a song
As the still hours thither brought to me.

20

Ah me! what thoughts are mine! I sit and dream
Of those fair colours clad, alas! in clay.
• O earth! why hast thou marred this tender theme—
My spotless pearl, that was mine own alway?

III

What lavish fragrance here is spread
By herb and flower, newly won!
Of blossoms white and blue and red,
No gayer rise to greet the sun.
Here nor fruit nor flower may fade,
Where passed my pearl to night of ground; 30
From dead grain cometh fruitful blade,
Else never wheat had harvest found.
Ever 't is good that good doth bring,
Such seemly seed it faileth not;
Here ever-fragrant flowers shall spring
O'er thee, my pearl without a spot.

IV

That place I sweeten with gentle rhyme,
I came to, where was my arbour green,
In the high season of August time,
When corn is cut with the sickle keen. 40
Where pearl lay under the grassy mead,
Shadowed it was with leafage green,
Gillyflower, ginger, and gromwell seed,
And peonies powdered all between.
Fair and seemly the sight was seen,
Fairer fragrance earth knoweth not;
Worthily won it was, I ween,
Of pearl, the precious, without a spot.

V

I gazed, my hands together pressed,
For, chilled with care and sorrow caught, 50
My heart beat wildly in my breast,
Though reason sager counsel taught.
I wept my pearl in earthly cell,
And timid reason fought with doubt;
Though Christ did comfort me full well,
Weak will with woe me cast about.
Such soothing scents the air did fill
That, lulled on this rose-peopled plot,
By sleep o'ercome, I rested still
Above my pearl without a spot. 60

VI

Thence sped my spirit far through space,
My body tranced upon the ground,
My soul's quick ghost by God's sure grace
Adventuring where be marvels found.
I wist not where on earth that place
With cloven cliffs, so high and sheer,
But toward a wood I set my face,
Borne whither radiant rocks appear.
Their light more golden than the sun,
A gleaming glory glinted thence: 70
Was never web of mortals spun
So wondrous fair to mortal sense.

VII

The hill-sides there were brightly crowned
With crystal cliffs so clear of kind,

And wood-sides, set with boles around,
Shone blue as is the blue of Inde.
On every branch, with light between,
The leaves of quivering silver hung;
Through gleaming glades with shimmering sheen
The light fell glistening them among. 80
The gravel rolled upon the shore
Was precious pearls of Orient.
The sun's bright beams were pale before
That sight so fair of wonderment.

VIII

My spirit there forgot its woe,
So wondrous were those charmed hills.
Rare flavoured fruits thereon did grow,
Fit food to cure all human ills.
In fair accord the birds flew by,
Like wingèd flames, both great and small, 90
Nor cittern string nor minstrelsy
Might hope to match their joyous call:
For when the air their red wings beat,
Full choir sang they rapturously.
No greater joy a man could greet
Than this to hear, and that to see.

IX

Past all that eye of man has seen,
Past any wealth of words he hath,
The beauty of those wood-ways green,
The witchery of that wooing path. 100
Still on I pressed, as one who goes
Companioned by a joyous mood,
Through deepening dells where richly rose

Fair flowers by winsome breezes wooed.
Hedge-rows and marsh where wild fowl breed
I saw, and lo! a golden band—
A wonder that did all exceed—
A sunlit river cleft the strand.



O marvellous river, broad and deep,
With banks that beam with beryl bright! 110
As music sweet the waters sweep,
Or gently murmur low and light.
From darkened depths shone jewels fine,
As gleams through glowing glass the light,
As quivering stars in the welkin shine,
When tired men sleep of a winter night.
Each little stone that stream below
Was emerald green, or sapphire gent;
From them the light did leap and glow,
To daze a man with wonderment. 120

XI

Wondrous glamour of down and vale,
Wood and water and noble plain,
Did build me bliss and made me hale,
Routed sorrow and cured my pain.
Low bowed beside the stream I strayed,
With breed of joys my mind was glad;
The more I walked by mere and glade,
More strength of joy my spirit had.
Fortune fares where likes she still,
Sends she solace or evil sore, 130
The wight on whom she works her will
Hath ever of either more and more.

XII

More and more, and yet far more,
I longed to see beyond the strand;
For if 't was fair on the nearer shore,
More lovelike was that farther land.
I stayed my steps,—I stood at gaze,
To find a ford I sought,—alas!
Beside the strand, as in a maze,
I won not any way to pass.
Though peril in my path might stand,
I recked not, where such treasures were;
But fresh delights were nigh at hand,
That did my wondering spirit stir.

140

XIII

What wonder more did daunt my sight?
I saw beyond that mystic mere
A shining cliff of crystal bright,
With royal rays, as morning clear.
At foot there sat a little maid—
A maid of grace, and debonair;
In glistening white was she arrayed,
Well known long ere I saw her there.
More radiant than refined gold,
She stood in sunshine on the shore.
Long did my sight that vision hold,
And more I knew her, more and more.

150

XIV

Long feasted I on her dear face,
The lissome curves her figure wore,

Until the gladness of her grace
My heart's guest was as ne'er before. 160
Her gentle name I fain had called,
But stayed was I with wonderment,
So strange the place I stood appalled,
My eager gaze upon her bent.
Then turned on me her visage fair,—
As ivory white the face she wore.
Heart-struck was I to see her there,
And still I loved her more and more.

XV

Yearning had I by dread opposed.
I stood full still, I durst not call, 170
With eyes wide open and mouth full closed,
Like to a well-trained hawk in hall.
Hope had I for my soul's behoof;
Fear had I it might thus befall,
That she I longed for might stay aloof,
Or pass forever beyond recall.
Lo! uprose that child of grace,
Slender, small, and seemly slight,—
Rose right royal with lifted face,
A precious maid, with pearls bedight. 180

XVI

When, fresh as dewy fleur-de-lys,
Adown the bank she moved toward me,
High fortune'd he on earth that sees
Such peerless pearls of empery.
As white as snow her amice gleams,
Her waist a lustrous broidery
Of pearls a man might see in dreams,

But never else on earth could see.
Full ample hung her sleeves, I ween;
Twain braided they with pearlës bright.
Her kirtle green alike was seen,
With pearls of price around bedight.

190

XVII

A crown did wear that maiden girl
Of margerys, and none other stone.
High pinnaced, of clear white pearl,
It glowed with flowers wrought thereon.
Her head no other gem did grace;
Her hair half hid her neck from view.
In statelihood of mighty place
She stood more white than whale tooth's hue.
Her loosened locks, that gold exceed,
Flowed wandering, o'er her shoulders curled;
Though dark their gold, they scarce did need
For contrast fair her robe impearled.

200

XVIII

Bravely broidered was every hem,
On sleeve and vest fair broidery lay
Of white pearls and no other gem,
And glossy shone her white array.
A wonder pearl without a taint
Lay moon-white where her bodice met;
Soul of man might falter and faint
Ere mind of man its price could set.
Tongue of man might ne'er be sure
With fitting words to tell aright
How spotless white and virgin pure
Was that rare pearl, my soul's delight.

210

xix

Decked with pearls, that precious piece
Of Heaven's make came down the strand;
My grief won wings of glad release
When that I saw her nearer stand. 220
None else of kin were dear as she,
And joyful then was my surprise
When seemed it she would speak to me,
And courteous bowed in woman wise.
She doffed her crown of jewels bright,
With low obeisance bending blithe.
Leave to answer that pearl of light
Made worth it well to be alive.

xx

'O Pearl, so gay with pearls,' quoth I,—
'O Pearl that in my loneliness 230
Art yearned for when at night I lie
Sole comrade of my own distress,—
Since over thee the grasses twine,
No love to mine with love replies.
May liking, love, and joy be thine,—
The strifeless bourne of Paradise.
Such ~~weird~~ as brought thee hither here,
With plight of sorrow hath me undone;
Now are we twayned that were so dear,
And in love's life were but as one.' 240

xxi

High crowned with pearls of Orient,
Looked up at me with fair blue eyes

That gracious maid with grave intent,
 And sober spake in courtly wise:
 'Sir, the tale is by half mistold
 To say thy pearl is all perdue,
 That a comely coffer in guard doth hold,
 In flowered gardens, gay to view,
 Where she may ever dwell and play,
 Where sin nor sorrow come never near.
 Safe should such treasury seem alway
 If thou didst love thy jewel dear.

250

breaks continue xxii

'Gentle Sir,' said the maiden gem,
 'Why do men jest? Distraught ye be.
 Three words hast said, and all of them
 Forsooth are folly,—yea, all the three.
 Thou knowest not what thy words may mean;
 Quick words thy tardy wits outfly.
 Dost surely think that I here am seen
 Because thou seest with mortal eye.
 Thou sayest, too, that thou, alas!
 May bide with me in this domain.
 The way this stream to freely pass
 No living wight may know to gain.

260

xxiii

'Small praise that man would have of me
 That trusts the wisdom of the eye.
 Much to be blamed and graceless he
 That thinks the Lord could speak a lie,—
 Our Lord who promised thy life to raise,
 Though fortune bid thy body die!
 Ye read his words in crooked ways

270

To trust alone what sees the eye:
And that is a fault of haughtiness
Doth ill a righteous man beseem,
To trow no tale has worthiness
Unless his reason so may deem.

xxiv

'Think now thyself if it be well
Of God such words as thine to say.
Dost think in this fair land to dwell?
Methinks 't were better his leave to pray: 280
And yet might fail thine eager quest.
Ere thou shalt pass that watery way
Thou first must find another rest,
And cold must lie thy corse in clay;
For it was marred in Paradise,
Where our yore-father wrought it loss,—
Through dreary death thy journey lies
Ere God will give thee leave to cross.

xxv

'Thou thinkest sorrow is naught but dole.
Why dost thou make this vain pretence? 290
For lesser loss the wailing soul
May lose far more than he laments.
Shouldst rather hold thee blessed by it,
And love thy God in weal and woe,
For anger helpeth thee no whit,
And man must bear what all must know.
Though thou shouldst prance as any doe,
And fret and chafe in mad unrest,
Thou canst not any further go,—
Abide thou must what He thinks best.' 300

xxvi

Then spake I to that demoiselle—
'Let not my Lord be wroth with me.
As from a spring quick waters well,
Leaps forth my speech so wild and free.
My lonely heart is sorrow-scarred,
In misericorde of Christ I rest,
Rebuke me not with words so hard,
Forlorn am I, adored and best.
Thy kindly comfort me afford
With piteous thinking upon this—
Of care and me ye made accord
Who once were ground of all my bliss.

310

xxvii

'Thou hast been both my bale and bliss,
But greater is the bale I moan.
On every field my pearl I miss,
I wist not where my pearl has flown.
With clearer sight is sorrow eased.
Ere parting came we were at one.
Forbid it, God, we be displeased,
Though met we not beneath the sun.
Though tender sweet thy courtesy,
I am but earth, my joy is gone;
Gone every hope of help for me
Save mercy of Christ, Marie, and John.

320

xxviii

'I see thee with thy comrade, joy.
Ah, think of me when thou art glad;

Sad hours my ageing life annoy,
A lonely man bereft and sad.
But now, within thy presence here
I fain would bide, and patient wait 330
That ye may tell—ah, pearl most dear—
What life ye have both early and late.
Full glad am I that thy estate
Is changed to worship and to weal;
Where thou hast passed to lofty state—
There lies the only joy I feel.'

xxix

'To know if here the life is led
Be glad, will that thy grief assuage.
Thou knowest when thy pearl lay dead
Full young was I, of tender age. 340
Lo! I am bride of Christ the Lamb!
Through sacred Godhead wedded sure;
A crownèd queen of bliss I am,
Through days that shall for aye endure.
Who have his love do hold in fee
This heritage. I am his alone;
His priceless glory is to me
The source of every joy I own.'

xxx

'Ah, Pearl of bliss, can this be true?
Let not my error bid me rue. 350
Art thou the Queen of heaven's blue
That all the world does honour to?
Art her we worship, the spring of grace,
Who bare a Child of virgin flower?
Ah, none can take her crown and place,

That pass her not in worth and power.
For singleness of gentillesse
We call her phenix of Araby,—
The bird none match in stateliness,
Like to that Queen of Courtesy.'

360

xxxi

'Ay, Queen of Courtesy!' she said;
And lowly knelt and hid her face.
'Matchless mother and merriest maid!
Blest beginner of all our grace.'
Then rose she up and 'gan to speak,
And looked at me across the space.
'Though many find what here they seek,
None here may take another's place.
The heavens do her empire make,
Of earth and hell the Queen is she;
Her heritage may no one take,
For she is Queen of Courtesy.'

370

xxxii

'Yea, courtesy, I well believe,
And charity do here belong.
Let not my words thy goodness grieve—
To me thy speech still seemeth wrong.
Thyself to set so high in heaven
As queen to make of one so young—
What honour more might him be given
That in the world by grief was wrung,
And bought his bliss by years of bale—
Yea, lived in penance wearily?
No lesser honour him could fail
Than King be crowned by courtesy.'

380

XXXIII

'Such courtesy too free appears,
If that be sooth which thou dost say.
On earth were thine but two brief years,
Never couldst thou God please or pray,
Knew never neither pater nor creed,—
But queen outright on thy death day,— 390
I may not trow it, so God me speed,
That God should rule so wrong a way.
Countess or demoiselle, par ma fay,
Were fair to be in heaven's estate,
Or else a lady of less array,—
But queen! it were too high a fate.'

XXXIV

'His goodness hath nor mete nor bound,'
Said then to me this worthsome wight;
'For all is truth where he is found,
Nought can he do but that is right. 400
This Matthew doth for thee express,
Writ clear in gospel sooth aright,
Ensampled plain for easy guess,
A parable of heavenly light.'
'My realm,' saith Christ, 'is like, on high,
A lord's that had a vineyard fair,
When lo! the vintage time was nigh,
And men must to his vines repair.'

XXXV

'Right well his men the season know,
So up full early that lord arose 410

To send them where his vines did grow,
And unto some did there propose
A penny a day to be their gain.
With this accord forthwith they go,
And toil and labour with honest pain,
And prune and carry, go to and fro.
At noon this lord the market seeks,
And finds men standing idle here.
“Why stand ye idle?” thus he speaks
“Now know ye not the time of year?”

420

XXXVI

“We hither came ere day begun,”
This was their answer, one and all.
“Here have we stood since rose the sun,
And no man yet on us doth call.”
“Go to my vineyard, work aright,
And rest ye sure,” that lord did say,
“What wages fair ye earn by night,
In very sooth I will surely pay.”
Into his vines they went and wrought,
The while he came, and came again,
And new men into his vineyard brought,
Until the day was on the wane.

430

XXXVII

‘At close of day, at evensong,
An hour before the sun had fled,
He saw their idle men and strong,
And unto them he gently said:
“Why stand ye idle all day long?”
“No man,” they said, “has come to hire.”
“Go to my vines, ye yeomen strong,

And work your best, as I desire."
Soon the world grew dusk and gray,
The sun went down, it waxèd late;
He summoned them to take their pay—
The hour had come for which they wait.

440

XXXVIII

'That lord well knew the time of day,
And bade his steward pay them all.
'Give every man his proper pay;
And that no blame on me may fall,
Set ye all of them in a row,
And give alike a penny to each.
Begin with him that stands most low,
Until the first his wage shall reach."
Thereon the first did quick complain:
'My lord, we toiled full long and sore;
These last have had but little pain,
Our wage should justly be far more."

450

XXXIX

'Then said this lord, "In sooth, I try
To use mine own as seemeth meet.
Why turn on me an evil eye,
Who justice seek and no man cheat?"
Quoth Christ, "I now do thus decree,
The first shall be the last, and those
Who latest came the first shall be,—
Of many called but few be chose."
Thus do poor men win their way,
Though late they come and low their state;
If brief has been their labour day,
The more of grace doth them await.

460

XL

'More bliss have I, and joy herein
 Of ladyship, and life's delight,
 Than all the men on earth might win
 If all they sought were theirs by right.
 Although the night was nigh at hand
 When came I to the vines at even,
 Among the first God bade me stand,
 And fullest wage to me was given.
 Yet others waited there in vain,
 Who toiled and sweated long of yore,
 And still no wage repaid their pain,
 And may not for a year or more.'

470

480

XLI

The Lamb's delight none doubted there.
 Though seemed he hurt and wounded sore,
 Yet glorious glad his glances were,
 And nought of pain his semblance bore.
 I looked among his radiant host,
 Quick with eternal life,—and lo!
 I saw my pearl's gentle ghost,
 I loved and lost so long ago.
 Lord! much of mirth that maiden made
 Among her peers, so pure and white
 I yearned to cross—all unafraid,
 So longed my love—so dear the sight.

490

XLII

Delight held captive eye and ear;
 My mortal mind toward madness drave,

I would be there where stayed my dear,
Beyond that river's mystic wave.
Methought that none would do so ill
As me to halt, if now I tried;
And if at start none checked my will,
Fain would I venture though I died. 500
Anon, from bold resolve I fell
When I would take that peril's chance;
In that rash mood I dare not dwell—
Not so my Prince's fair pleasance.

XLIII

It pleased not God that I come near,
Or think to cross that guarding mere,
Aghast I stood, alone with fear—
Alone, and she no longer here.
For, as I stood beside the stream,
I wakened in that arbour's shade. 510
Gone was the gladness of my dream!
My head was on that hillock laid
Where over her the roses grow.
Heartsore I lay upon the sod,
And to myself I murmured low:
'Blest be my maid in care of God.'

XLIV

So hard it was to drift away
From that fair region all too soon,
From sights so gallant, blithe and gay,
That weak with hurt I seemed to swoon, 520
And ruefully my head I bowed.
'O Pearl,' said I, 'of rare renown!

O, news of joy!' I cried aloud,
 'In this glad vision sent me down.
 And if thy tale in sooth be so,
 And thou art clad in joy's delight,
 Well am I in this home of woe,
 Since thou hast pleased the Prince's sight.'

XLV

If to God's pleasure I had but bent,
 And craved no more than man is given, 530
 And held me humble, with this content,
 As prayed that pearl in goodness thriven,—
 Then by God's grace I were less amiss,
 More mysteries my soul had won;
 But man can have more greed of bliss
 Than life may give ere life be done.
 Therefore too soon my joy was riven,
 And I exiled from realms eterne.
 Lord! mad are they with thee have striven,
 For what doth not thy pleasure earn! 540

XLVI

To win the Prince's love aright
 For Christen men is an easy end.
 Yea, I have found him, by day and night,
 A God, a Lord, full firm a friend.
 Befell me this on that mound's green sod,—
 For sorrow of Pearl there lay I prone,
 And this my jewel gave o'er to God,
 In Christ's dear blessing and eke mine own.
 Christ, that in form of bread and wine,
 The priest doth show, wherein God grants 550

To us his servants here a sign
That we be pearls of his pleasance.

c. 1375

THE VISION OF WILLIAM CONCERNING
PIERS PLOWMAN

THE FIELD FULL OF FOLK

IN A summer season when the sun was softest,
Shrouded in a smock, in shepherd's clothing,
In the habit of a hermit of unholy living,
I went through this world to witness wonders.
On a May morning on a Malvern hillside
I saw strange sights like scenes of Faerie.
I was weary of wandering and went to rest
By the bank of a brook in a broad meadow.
As I lay and leaned and looked on the water
I slumbered and slept, so sweetly it murmured. 10

Then I met with marvelous visions.
I was in a wilderness; where, I knew not.
I looked up at the East at the high sun,
And saw a tower on a toft artfully fashioned.
A deep dale was beneath with a dungeon in it,
And deep ditches and dark, dreadful to see.

list A fair field full of folk I found between them,
With all manner of men, the meanest and the richest,
Working and wandering as the world demanded.
Some put them to the plow and practiced hardship 20
In setting and sowing and seldom had leisure;
They won what wasters consumed in gluttony.
Some practiced pride and quaint behavior,
And came disguised in clothes and features.
Prayer and penance prevailed with many.
For the love of our Lord they lived in strictness,

To have bliss hereafter and heavenly riches.
Hermits and anchorites held to their dwellings,
Gave up the course of country roving
And all lusty living that delights the body. 30
Some turned to trade; they tried barter;
And seemed in our sight to succeed better.
Some men were mirthful, learned minstrelcies,
And got gold as gleemen—a guiltless practice.
Yet jesters and janglers, Judas' children,
Feigned idle fancies and wore fool's clothing,
But had wit if they wished to work as others.
What Paul has preached I proffer without glossing:
Qui loquitur turpiloquium,¹ is Lucifer's servant.

Bidders and beggars ride about the country 40
With bread to the brim in their bags and bellies;
They feign that they are famished and fight in the
ale-house.

God wot, they go in gluttony to their chambers
And rise with ribaldry, like Robert's children.
Sleep and sloth pursue them always.

Pilgrims and palmers were plighted together
To seek Saint James and saints in Rome.
They went on their way with many wise stories,
And had leave to lie for a lifetime after.
I saw some who said that they sought for relics; 50
In each tale that they told their tongue would always
Speak more than was so, it seemed to my thinking.

A host of hermits with hooked staves
Went to Walsingham with their wenches behind them.
These great lubbers and long, who were loath to labor,
Clothed themselves in copes to be distinguished from
others,

And robed themselves as hermits to roam at their leisure
There I found friars of all the four orders,

¹ He who speaks slander.

Who preached to the people for the profit of their bellies,

And glossed the gospel to their own good pleasure; 60
They coveted their copes, and construed it to their liking.

Many master-brothers may clothe themselves to their fancy,

For their money and their merchandise multiply together.

Since charity has turned chapman to shrive lords and ladies,

Strange sights have been seen in a few short years.

Unless they and Holychurch hold closer together

The worst misery of man will mount up quickly.

There a pardoner preached as priest of the parish,

And brought out a bull with a' bishop's signet

Said that he himself might assoil all men 70

Of all falsehood in fasting and vows that were broken.

Common folk confided in him and liked his preaching,

And crept up on cowed knees and kissed his pardons.

He abused them with brevets and blinded their eyesight;

His devil's devises drew rings and brooches.

They gave their gold to keep gluttons,

And believed in liars and lovers of lechery.

If the bishop were blessed and worth both his ears

His seal would not be sent to deceive the people.

But the power of the bishop is not this preacher's license, 80

For the parish priest and the pardoner share the profits together

Which the poor of the parish would have if these were honest.

Because parishes were poor since the pestilence season,
Parsons and parish priests petitioned the bishops

For a license to leave and live in London
And sing there for simony, for silver is sweet.

Bishops and bachelors, both masters and doctors,
Who have cures under Christ and are crowned with the
 tonsure,

In sign of their service to shrive the parish,
To pray and preach and give the poor nourishment, 90
Lodge in London in Lent and the long year after;

Some are counting coins in the king's chamber,
Or in exchequer and chancery challenging his debts
From wards and wardmotes, waifs and strays.

Some serve as servants to lords and ladies
And sit in the seats of steward and butler.

They hear mass and matins, and many of their hours
Are done without devotion. There is danger that at
 last

Christ in his consistory will curse many.

THE CONFESSION OF SLOTH

THEN Sloth came all beslobbered, with slime on his
 eyelids;

"I must sit," he said, "or else I shall slumber.

I cannot stand or stoop, and want a stool for kneeling.
If I were brought to bed, unless my buttocks made me,
No ringing should make me rise till I was ripe for
 dinner."

He began *benedicite* with a belch and beat his fore-
 head,

And roared and raved and snored for a conclusion.

"Awake! awake! wretch," cried Repentance, "make
 ready for shriving."

"If I should die to-day I should never do it.

I cannot say *pater noster* perfectly, as the priest sings
 it.

I know rhymes of Robin Hood and Randolph Earl of
Chester,

But of our Lord or of our Lady I have learned nothing.
I have made forty vows and forgotten them on the
morrow.

I never performed the penance as the priest commanded,
Nor was sorry for my sins as a man should be.

And if I pray at my beads, unless Wrath bids me,
What I tell with my tongue is two miles from my
meaning.

I am occupied each day, on holy days and all days,
With idle tales at ale, or at other times in churches.
Rarely do I remember God's pain and passion. 20

I never visit the feeble nor the fettered men in prison.
I had rather hear ribaldry or a summer game of cob-
blers,

Or lies to laugh at and belie my neighbor,
Than all that the four evangelists have ever written.
Vigils and fasting days slip unheeded.

I lie abed in Lent with my lemman beside me,
And when matins and mass are over I go to my friars.
If I reach to *ite missa est*¹ I have done my duty.
Sometimes I am not shriven, unless sickness force me,
More than twice in two years, and then I do it by guess
work. 30

I have been priest and parson for the past thirty
winters,
Yet I know neither the scales nor the singing nor the
Saints' Legends.

I can find an hare afield or frighten him from his furrow
Better than read *beatus vir*² or *beati omnes*,³
Construe their clauses and instruct my parishoners.
I can hold love-days and hear a reve's reckoning,

¹ The concluding words of the mass.

² Psalms, i or cxii.

³ Psalms, cxxviii.

But I cannot construe a line in the Canons or Decretals.

If I beg or borrow and it be not tallied
I forget it as quickly; men can ask me
Six times or seven and I will swear to the falsehood. 40
So I trouble true men twenty times over.

The salary of my servants is seldom even.
I answer angrily when the accounts are reckoned,
And my workman's wages are wrath and cursing.
If any man does me a favour or helps me in trouble,
I answer courtesy with unkindness, and cannot under-
stand it.

I have now and I have ever had a hawk's manners.
I am not lured with love where nothing lies in the fingers.

Sixty times I, Sloth, have since forgotten
The kindness that fellow Christians have granted to
me. 50

Sometimes I spill—in speech or silence—
Both flesh and fish and many other victuals,
Bread and ale, butter, milk and cheeses,
All slobbered in my service till they may serve no man.

I was a roamer in my youth and reckless in study,
And ever since have been a beggar from foul slothful-
ness:

*Heu mihi! quia sterilem vitam duxi juvenilem!"*¹

"Do you repent," said Repentance,—but the wretch
was swooning,

Till Vigilante, the watcher, threw water on his forehead,
And flung it in his face, and vehemently addressed
him, 60

And cried, "Beware of Desperation, that betrays many!
Say, 'I am sorry for my sins,' say it and believe it,
Beat your breast and beseech Him to have mercy;
For there is no guilt so great that His goodness is not
greater."

¹ Woe is me that I led such an unprofitable life in my youth.

Then Sloth sat up and so crossed himself quickly,
 And made a vow before God: "For my foul living
 Every Sunday this seven years, unless sickness keep
 me,
 I will go down before day-break to the dear chapel,
 And hear matins and mass, like a monk in his cloister.
 No ale after meat shall hold me absent 70
 Till I have heard evensong, I vow by the rood-tree."

PIERS THE PLOWMAN'S PARDON

"PIERS," said a priest, "give me your pardon quickly.
 I shall translate the text and turn it into English."

Piers opened his pardon at the priest's bidding.
 I was behind them both and beheld all the charter.
 All lay in two lines, and not a leaf further.

The witness was Truth; and it was written thus:

Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam eternam.

*Qui vero mala, in ignem eternum.*¹

"Peter," said the priest, "there is no pardon in it,
 But do well and have well, and God shall have your
 soul; 10

And do evil and have evil, and you may hope only
 That after your death day the devil shall take you."

Then Piers in pure wrath pulled it to pieces,
 And said: "*Si ambulavero in medio umbræ mortis, non
 timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum es.*"²

I shall stop my sowing," said Piers, "and cease from
 such hard labor,

Nor be so busy now about my comfort.

Prayers and penance shall be my plow hereafter.

I shall weep when I should sleep, though wheat bread
 fail me.

¹ And they whose works are good shall pass into life eternal, but
 they whose works are evil into fire everlasting.

² Psalms, xxiii, 4.

The prophet ate bread in penance and in sorrow.
 The psalter says that so did many others. 20
 He who loves God loyally has livelihood easily.

*Fuerunt mihi lacrimae meæ panes die ac nocte.*¹
 And unless Luke lie, birds teach us the lesson
 Not to be too busy about the world's pleasures.
Ne solliciti sitis, he says in the gospel,
 And gives us guidance in governing ourselves rightly.
 Who finds the fowls their food in winter?

They have no garner to go to, but God provisions them."

"What," said the priest to Perkin, "Peter, bless
 me,
 You are lettered a little; where did you learn read-
 ing?" 30

"Abstinence, the abbess," said Piers, "taught the
 A. B. C. to me,

And Conscience came forward and declared much fur-
 ther."

"If you were a priest, Piers," he said, "you might
 preach at your liking,

And be a doctor in divinity, with *Dixit insipiens*."

"Rude rogue," said Piers, "you have read little in the
 Bible.

You have seldom seen Solomon's proverbs:

Ejice derisores et jurgia cum eis, ne crescant,"² etc.

The priest and Perkin opposed each other,
 And at their wrangling I awoke and saw the world
 about me,

And the sun sailing in the southern heaven. 40

Meatless and moneyless on the Malvern hillsides

I went on my way, wondering at the vision.

Often has this vision forced me to wonder

If what I saw asleep were so indeed.

I pondered pensively on Piers the Plowman;

¹ Psalms, xlii, 3.

² Proverbs, xxii, 10.

On what a pardon Piers had for all peoples' comfort,
 And how the priest impugned it with two pert words.
 I am a doubter of dreams, for they deceive men often.
 Cato and the Canonists counsel us never
 To seek assurance in dreams, for *sompnia ne cures*.¹ 50
 But a book of the Bible bears witness.

c. 1376

GEOFFREY CHAUCER (1340?-1400)

THE CANTERBURY TALES

THE PROLOGUE

WHAN that Aprille with his shoures sote²
 The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,
 And bathed every veyne in swich³ licour,
 Of which vertu⁴ engendred is the flour;
 Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
 Inspired hath in every holt⁵ and heeth
 The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
 Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,⁶
 And smale fowles maken melodye
 That slepen al the night with open yē, 10
 (So priketh hem nature in hir corages):⁷
 Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
 (And palmers for to seken straunge strondes)
 To ferne halwes,⁸ couthe⁹ in sondry londes;
 And specially, from every shires ende
 Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
 The holy blisful martir¹⁰ for to seke,
 That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.

¹ Pay no heed to dreams ² sweet ³ such ⁴ by virtue of
 which ⁵ wood ⁶ i.e. in mid-April ⁷ hearts ⁸ distant saints
⁹ known ¹⁰ St. Thomas à Becket

Bifel that, in that seson on a day,
 In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay 20
 Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
 To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
 At night was come in-to that hostelrye
 Wel nyne and twenty in a companye,
 Of sondry folk, by aventure y-falle¹
 In felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle,
 That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde;
 The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
 And wel we weren esed atte beste.²
 And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste, 30
 So hadde I spoken with hem everichon,
 That I was of hir felawshipe anon,
 And made forward³ erly for to ryse,
 To take our wey, ther as I yow devyse.

But natheles, whyl I have tyme and space,
 Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
 Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoun,
 To telle yow al the condicioun
 Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
 And whiche they weren, and of what degree; 40
 And eek in what array that they were inne:
 And at a knight than wol I first biginne.

A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
 That fro the tyme that he first bigan
 To ryden out, he loved chivalrye,
 Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.
 Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
 And thereto hadde he riden (no man ferre)⁴
 As wel in Cristendom as hethenesse,
 And ever honoured for his worthinesse. 50

At Alisaundre he was, whan it was wonne;
 Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne⁵

¹ by chance fallen ² entertained in the best manner
 ment ⁴ farther ⁵ sat at the head of the table

³ agree-

Aboven alle naciouns in Pruce.¹
 In Lettow² hadde he reysed³ and in Ruce,
 No Cristen man so ofte of his degree.
 In Gernade⁴ at the sege eek hadde he be
 Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.⁵
 At Lyeys⁶ was he, and at Satalye,⁷
 Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See⁸
 At many a noble aryve⁹ hadde he be. 60
 At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
 And foughten for our feith at Tramissene¹⁰
 In listes thryes, and ay slayn his fo.
 This ilke worthy knight had been also
 Somtyme with the lord of Palatye,¹¹
 Ageyn¹² another hethen in Turkye:
 And evermore he hadde a sovereyn prys.¹³
 And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
 And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
 He never yet no vileinye ne sayde 70
 In al his lyf, un-to no maner wight.
 He was a verray parfit gentil knight.
 But for to tellen yow of his array,
 His hors were gode, but he was nat gay.
 Of fustian¹⁴ he wered a gipoun¹⁵
 Al bismotered¹⁶ with his habergeoun;¹⁷
 For he was late y-come from his viage,¹⁸
 And wente for to doon his pilgrimage.

With him ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER,
 A lovyere, and a lusty bacheler, 80
 With lokkes crulle,¹⁹ as they were leyd in presse.
 Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.

¹ Prussia ² Lithuania ³ made an expedition ⁴ Granada
⁵ in northern Africa ⁶ in Armenia ⁷ in Asia Minor ⁸ Medi-
 terranean ⁹ landing ¹⁰ in northern Africa ¹¹ in Asia Minor
¹² against ¹³ excellent reputation ¹⁴ coarse cloth ¹⁵ doublet
¹⁶ stained ¹⁷ coat-of-mail ¹⁸ voyage ¹⁹ curly

Of his stature he was of even¹ lengthe,
 And wonderly deliver,² and greet of strengthe.
 And he had been somtyme in chivachye,³
 In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Picardye,
 And born him wel, as of so litel space,
 In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
 Embrouded was he, as it were a mede⁴
 Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and rede. 90
 Singinge he was, or floytinge,⁵ al the day;
 He was as fresh as is the month of May.
 Short was his goune, with sleeves longe and wyde.
 Wel coude he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.
 He coude songes make and wel endyte,
 Juste⁶ and eek daunce, and wel purtreye and wryte.
 So hote he lovede, that by nightertale⁷
 He sleep namore than dooth a nightingale.
 Curteys he was, lowly, and servisable,
 And carf⁸ biforn his fader at the table. 100

A YEMAN⁹ hadde he, and servaunts namo
 At that tyme, for him liste ryde so;
 And he was clad in cote and hood of grene;
 A sheef of pecok-arwes brighte and kene
 Under his belt he bar ful thriftily;
 (Wel coude he cresse his takel¹⁰ yemanly:
 His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe),
 And in his hand he bar a mighty bowe.
 A not-heed¹¹ hadde he, with a broun visage.
 Of wode-craft wel coude¹² he al the usage. 110
 Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,¹³
 And by his syde a swerd and a bokeler,
 And on that other syde a gay daggere,
 Harneised¹⁴ wel, and sharp as point of spere;

¹ average ² active ³ military expeditions ⁴ meadow ⁵ flut-
 ing ⁶ joust ⁷ at night ⁸ carved ⁹ yeoman ¹⁰ take care
 of his weapons ¹¹ cropped head ¹² knew ¹³ guard ¹⁴ equipped

A Cristofre¹ on his brest of silver shene.²
 An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene;
 A forster³ was he, soothly, as I gesse.

Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
 That of hir smyling was ful simple and coy
 Hir gretteste ooth was but by sēynt Loy; 120
 And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.

Ful wel she song the service divyne,
 Entuned in hir nose ful semely;
 And Frensh she spak ful faire and fetisly,⁴
 After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,⁵
 For Frensh of Paris was to hir unknowe.

At mete wel y-taught was she with-alle;
 She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,
 Ne wette hir fingres in hir sauce depe.
 Wel coude she carie a morsel, and wel kepe, 130
 That no drope ne fille up-on her brest.

In curteisye was set full muche hir lest.⁶
 Hir over lippe wyped she so clene,
 That in hir coppe was no ferthing⁷ sene
 Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.

Ful semely after hir mete she raughte,⁸
 And sikerly she was of great disport,⁹
 And ful plesaunt, and amiable of port,
 And peyned hir to countrefete chere¹⁰
 Of court, and been estatlich of manere, 140
 And to ben holden digne¹¹ of reverence.

But, for to speken of hir conscience,
 She was so charitable and so pitous,
 She wolde wepe, if that she sawe a mous
 Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
 Of smale houndes had she, that she fedde

¹ image of Saint Christopher (patron saint of travelers) ² bright
³ forester ⁴ elegantly ⁵ a convent-school near London ⁶ desire
⁷ smallest bit ⁸ reached ⁹ good-nature ¹⁰ manners ¹¹ worthy

With rosted flesh, or milk and wastelbreed.¹
 But sore weep she if oon of hem were deed,
 Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte:²
 And al was conscience and tendre herte. 150
 Ful semely hir wimpel pinched³ was;
 Hir nose tretys;⁴ hir eyen greye as glas;
 Hir mouth ful smal, and ther-to softe and reed;
 But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;
 It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe;
 For, hardily,⁵ she was nat undergrowe.
 Ful fetis⁶ was hir cloke, as I was war.
 Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar
 A peire⁷ of bedes, gauded al with grene;⁸
 And ther-on heng a broche of gold ful shene, 160
 On which ther was first write a crowned A,
 And after, *Amor vincit omnia*.⁹

Another NONNE with hir hadde she,
 That was hir chapeleyne, and PREESTES THREE.

A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrye,¹⁰
 An out-rydere,¹¹ that lovede venerye;¹²
 A manly man, to been an abbot able.
 Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable:
 And, whan he rood, men mighte his brydel here
 Ginglen in a whistling wind as clere, 170
 And eek as loude as dooth the chapel-belle
 Ther as this lord was keper of the celle.¹³
 The reule of seint Maure or of seint Beneit,¹⁴
 By-cause that it was old and som-del streit,¹⁵
 This ilke monk leet olde thinges pace,¹⁶

¹ fine bread ² with a stick smartly ³ pleated ⁴ well formed
⁵ certainly ⁶ handsome ⁷ string ⁸ furnished with green beads
⁹ Love conquers all ¹⁰ a very fine fellow ¹¹ inspector (of equip-
 ment of monasteries) ¹² hunting ¹³ subordinate monastery
¹⁴ the regulations of the Benedictines ¹⁵ somewhat strict ¹⁶ go

And held after the newe world the space.
 He yaf nat of that text a pulled ¹ hen,
 That seith, that hunters been nat holy men;
 Ne that a monk, whan he is cloisterlees,
 Is lykned til a fish that is waterlees; 180
 This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloistre.
 But thilke text held he nat worth an oistre;
 And I seyde, his opinioun was good.
 What sholde he studie, and make himselven wood,²
 Upon a book in cloistre alway to poure,
 Or swinken ³ with his handes, and laboure,
 As Austin ⁴ bit? ⁵ How shal the world be served?
 Lat Austin have his swink to him reserved.
 Therefore he was a pricasour ⁶ aright;
 Grehoundes he hadde, as swifte as fowel in flight; 190
 Of priking ⁷ and of hunting for the hare
 Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
 I seigh ⁸ his sleves purfled ⁹ at the hond
 With grys,¹⁰ and that the fyneste of a lond;
 And, for to festne his hood under his chin,
 He hadde of gold y-wrought ¹¹ a curious pin:
 A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
 His heed was balled ¹² that shoon as any glas,
 And eek his face, as he had been anoint.
 He was a lord ful fat and in good point; ¹³ 200
 His eyen stepe,¹⁴ and rollinge in his heed,
 That stemed ¹⁵ as a forneys of a leed; ¹⁶
 His botes ¹⁷ souple, his hors in greet estat.
 Now certainly he was a fair prelat;
 He was nat pale as a for-pyned ¹⁸ goost.

¹ plucked ² crazy ³ labor ⁴ Saint Augustine ⁵ commands
⁶ hard rider ⁷ riding ⁸ saw ⁹ trimmed ¹⁰ fur ¹¹ fash-
 ioned ¹² bald ¹³ condition ¹⁴ bright ¹⁵ glowed ¹⁶ fire
 under a cauldron ¹⁷ boots ¹⁸ wasted away

A fat swan loved he best of any roost.
His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.

A FRERE ther was, a wantown and a merye,
A limitour,¹ a ful solempne man.

In alle the ordres foure² is noon that can³ 210

So muche of daliaunce and fair langage.

He hadde maad ful many a mariage

Of yonge wommen, at his owne cost.

Un-to his ordre he was a noble post.⁴

Ful wel biloved and famulier was he

With frankeleyns⁵ over-al in his contree,

And eek with worthy wommen of the toun:

For he had power of confessioun,

As seyde him-self, more than a curat,

For of his ordre he was licentiat. 220

Ful swetely herde he confessioun,

And plesaunt was his absolucioun;

He was an esy man to yeve penaunce

Ther as he wiste to han⁶ a good pitaunce;

For unto a povre ordre for to yive

Is signe that a man is wel y-shrive.

For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,⁷

He wiste that a man was repentaunt.

For many a man so hard is of his herte,

He may nat wepe al-thogh him sore smerte. 230

Therefore, in stede of weping and preyeres,

Men moot⁸ yeve silver to the povre freres.

His tipet was ay farsed⁹ ful of knyves

And pinnes, for to yeven faire wyves.

And certainly he hadde a mery note;

Wel coude he singe and pleyen on a rote.¹⁰

Of yeddinges¹¹ he bar utterly the prys.

¹ a friar licensed to beg ² the four monastic orders: Augustinian,
Franciscan, Dominican, Carmelite ³ knows ⁴ pillar ⁵ country
gentlemen ⁶ knew he should have ⁷ boast ⁸ should ⁹ stuffed
¹⁰ fiddle ¹¹ songs

His nekke whyt was as the flour-de-lys;
 Ther-to he strong was as a champioun.
 He knew the tavernes wel in every toun, 240
 And everich hostiler and tappestere
 Bet ¹ than a lazar ² or a beggestere; ³
 For un-to swich a worthy man as he
 Acorded nat,⁴ as by his facultee,⁵
 To have with seke lazars aqueyntaunce.
 It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce
 For to delen with no swich poraille,⁶
 But al with riche and sellers of vitaille.
 And over-al, ther as profit sholde aryse,
 Curteys he was, and lowly of servyse. 250
 Ther nas no man no-wher so vertuous.
 He was the beste begger in his hous;
 For thogh a widwe hadde noght a sho,⁷
 So plesaunt was his "*In principio*,"⁸
 Yet wolde he have a ferthing, er he wente.
 His purchas ⁹ was wel bettre than his rente.¹⁰
 And rage he coude, as it were right a whelpe.
 In love-dayes ¹¹ ther coude he muchel helpe.
 For there he was nat lyk a cloisterer,
 With a thredbar cope, as is a povre scoler, 260
 But he was lyk a maister or a pope.
 Of double worsted was his semi-cope,¹²
 That rounded as a belle out of the presse.¹³
 Somewhat he lipped, for his wantownesse,
 To make his English swete up-on his tongue;
 And in his harping, whan that he had songe,
 His eyen twinkled in his heed aright,
 As doon the sterres in the frosty night.
 This worthy limitour was cleped Huberd.

¹ better ² leper ³ beggar woman ⁴ it was not fitting
⁵ importance ⁶ poor people ⁷ shoe ⁸ the beginning of the
 gospel of Saint John ⁹ proceeds of his begging ¹⁰ regular income
¹¹ days for settling disputes ¹² short cape ¹³ clothes press

A MARCHANT was ther with a forked berd, 270
 In mottelee,¹ and hye on horse he sat,
 Up-on his heed a Flaundrish bever hat;
 His botes clasped faire and fetisly.
 His resons he spak ful solempnely,
 Souninge² always th'encrees of his winning.
 He wolde the see were kept for any thing³
 Bitwixe Middleburgh⁴ and Orewelle.⁵
 Wel coude he in eschaunge⁶ sheeldes⁷ selle.
 This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette;⁸
 Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette, 280
 So estatly was he of his governaunce,⁹
 With his bargaynes, and with his chevisaunce.¹⁰
 For sothe he was a worthy man with-alle,
 But sooth to seyn, I noot how men him calle.

A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also,
 That un-to logik hadde longe y-go.
 As lene was his hors as is a rake,
 And he nas nat right fat, I undertake;
 But loked holwe, and ther-to soberly.
 Ful thredbar was his overest courtepy;¹¹ 290
 For he had geten him yet no benefyce,
 Ne was so worldly for to have offyce.
 For him was lever¹² have at his beddes heed
 Twenty bokes, clad in blak or reed,
 Of Aristotle and his philosophye,
 Than robes riche, or fithele,¹³ or gay sautrye.¹⁴
 But al be that he was a philosophre,
 Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;¹⁵
 But al that he mighte of his freendes hente,¹⁶
 On bokes and on lerning he it spente, 300

¹ cloth of a mixed color ² concerning ³ guarded at all costs
⁴ in Holland ⁵ in England ⁶ exchange ⁷ shields, French coins
⁸ employed ⁹ management ¹⁰ dealings ¹¹ overcoat ¹² would
 rather ¹³ fiddle ¹⁴ psaltery (musical instrument) ¹⁵ i.e. he
 did not understand alchemy ¹⁶ get

And bisily gan for the soules preye
 Of hem that yaf him wher-with to scoleye.¹
 Of studie took he most cure ² and most hede.
 Noght o word spak he more than was nede,
 And that was seyð in forme and reverence,
 And short and quik, and ful of hy sentence.³
 Souninge in ⁴ moral vertu was his speche,
 And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE, war ⁵ and wys,
 That often hadde been at the parvys,⁶ 310
 Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
 Discreet he was, and of greet reverence:
 He semed swich, his wordes weren so wyse.
 Justyce he was ful often in assyse,
 By patente, and by pleyn commissioun;
 For his science, and for his heigh renoun
 Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.
 So greet a purchasour ⁷ was no-wher noon.
 Al was fee simple to him in effect,
 His purchasing mighte nat been infect.⁸ 320
 No-wher so bisy a man as he ther nas,
 And yet he semed bisier than he was.
 In termes ⁹ hadd he caas ¹⁰ and domes ¹¹ alle,
 That from the tyme of king William were falle.
 Therto he coude endyte, and make a thing,
 Ther coude no wight pinche at his wryting;
 And every statut coude he pleyn by rote.¹²
 He rood but hoonly in a medlee cote
 Girt with a ceint ¹³ of silk, with barres smale;
 Of his array telle I no lenger tale. 330

A FRANKLEYN ¹⁴ was in his companye;
 Whyt was his berd, as is the dayesye.

¹ go to school ² care ³ maxims ⁴ conducing to ⁵ cautious
⁶ the church porch (of St. Paul's where lawyers met) ⁷ conveyancer
⁸ invalidated ⁹ verbatim ¹⁰ cases ¹¹ decisions ¹² fully by
heart ¹³ girdle ¹⁴ land owner

Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
 Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn.¹
 To liven in delyt was ever his wone,²
 For he was Epicurus owne sone,
 That heeld opinioun, that pleyn delyt
 Was verrailly felicitee parfyt.
 An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;
 Seint Julian ³ he was in his contree. 340
 His breed, his ale, was alwey after oon,⁴
 A bettre envyned ⁵ man was no-wher noon.
 With-oute bake mete was never his hous,
 Of fish and flesh, and that so plentevous,
 It snewed ⁶ in his hous of mete and drinke,
 Of alle deyntees that men coude thinke.
 After the sondry sesons of the yeer,
 So chaunged he his mete and his soper.
 Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in mewe,⁷
 And many a breem ⁸ and many a luce ⁹ in stewe.¹⁰ 350
 Wo was his cook, but-if his sauce were
 Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his gere.
 His table dormant ¹¹ in his halle alway
 Stood redy covered al the longe day.
 At sessiouns ther was he lord and sire;
 Ful ofte tyme he was knight of the shire.
 An anlas ¹² and a gipser ¹³ al of silk
 Heng at his girdel, whyt as morne milk.
 A shirreve hadde he been, and a countour;¹⁴
 Was no-wher such a worthy vavasour.¹⁵ 360
 An HABERDASSHER and a CARPENTER,
 A WEBBE,¹⁶ a DYERE, and a TAPICER ¹⁷
 Were with us eek,¹⁸ clothed in o ¹⁹ liverree,

¹ wine	² habit	³ patron saint of hospitality	⁴ the same
quality	⁵ provided	with wine	⁶ snowed
of fish	⁷ coop	⁸ a kind	⁹ pike
¹⁰ fish-pond	¹¹ permanent	table	¹² dagger
¹³ purse	¹⁴ auditor	¹⁵ landed gentleman	¹⁶ weaver
holsterer	¹⁷ up-	¹⁸ also	¹⁹ one

Of a solempne and greet fraternitee.
 Ful fresh and newe hir gere apyked ¹ was;
 Hir knyves were y-chaped ² noght with bras,
 But al with silver, wroght ful clene and weel,
 Hir girdles and hir pouches every-deel.³
 Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys,
 To sitten in a yeldhalle ⁴ on a deys.⁵ 370
 Everich, for the wisdom that he can,
 Was shaply for to been an alderman.
 For catel ⁶ hadde they y-nogh and rente,
 And eek hir wyves wolde it wel assente;
 And elles certein were they to blame.
 It is ful fair to been y-clept "*ma dame*,"
 And goon to vigilyës al bifore,
 And have a mantel royalliche y-bore.

A Cook they hadde with hem for the nones
 To boille the chiknes with the marybones, 380
 And poudre-marchant tart,⁷ and galingale.⁸
 Wel coude he knowe a draughte of London ale.
 He coude roste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,
 Maken mortreux,⁹ and wel bake a pye.
 But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,
 That on his shine a mormal ¹⁰ hadde he;
 For blankmanger,¹¹ that made he with the beste.

A SHIPMAN was ther, woning fer by weste:
 For aught I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.
 He rood up-on a rouncy,¹² as he couthe,¹³ 390
 In a gowne of falding ¹⁴ to the knee.
 A daggere hanging on a laas ¹⁵ hadde he
 Aboute his nekke under his arm adoun.
 The hote somer had maad his hewe al broun;
 And, certainly, he was a good felawe.

¹ trimmed ² mounted ³ every bit ⁴ guild-hall ⁵ dais
⁶ property ⁷ sharp flavoring powder ⁸ a spice ⁹ stews
¹⁰ sore ¹¹ chicken compote ¹² nag ¹³ as well as he knew how
¹⁴ coarse cloth ¹⁵ cord

Ful many a draughte of wyn had he y-drawe
 From Burdeux-ward, whyl that the chapman sleep.
 Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
 If that he faught, and hadde the hyer hond,
 By water he sente hem hoom to every land.¹ 400
 But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,
 His stremes² and his daungers him bisydes,
 His herberwe³ and his mone, his lodemenage,⁴
 Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.⁵
 Hardy he was, and wys to undertake;
 With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.
 He knew wel alle the havenes, as they were,
 From Gootlond⁶ to the cape of Finistere,
 And every cryke in Britayne and in Spayne;
 His barge y-cleped was the Maudelayne. 410

With us ther was a DOCTOUR OF PHISYK, ,
 In al this world ne was ther noon him lyk
 To speke of phisik and of surgerye;
 For he was grounded in astronomye.
 He kepte his pacient a ful greet del
 In houres,⁷ by his magik naturel.
 Wel coude he fortunen the ascendent
 Of his images⁸ for his pacient.
 He knew the cause of everich maladye,
 Were it of hoot or cold, or moiste, or drye, 420
 And where engendred, and of what humour;
 He was a verrey parfit practisour.
 The cause y-knowe, and of his harm the rote,
 Anon he yaf the seke man his bote.⁹
 Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries,
 To sende him drogges and his letuaries,¹⁰

¹ he made them walk the plank ² currents ³ harborage ⁴ pilot-
 age ⁵ Carthagina in Spain ⁶ Gottland in the Baltic ⁷ he
 watched for the favorable star of his patient ⁸ he knew by the
 stars the exact moment for devising images ⁹ remedy ¹⁰ syrups

For ech of hem made other for to winne;
 Hir frendschipe nas nat newe to biginne.
 Wel knew he th' olde Esculapius,
 And Deiscorides, and eek Rufus, 430
 Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galien;
 Serapion, Razis, and Avicen;
 Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn;
 Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.¹
 Of his diete mesurable was he,
 For it was of no superfluitee,
 But of greet norissing and digestible.
 His studie was but litel on the bible.
 In sangwin² and in pers³ he clad was al,
 Lyned with taffata and with sendal;⁴ 440
 And yet he was but esy of dispence;⁵
 He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
 For gold in phisik is a cordial,
 Therfore he lovede gold in special.

A good WYF was ther of bisyde BATHE,
 But she was som-del⁶ deef, and that was scathe.⁷
 Of clooth-making she hadde swiche an haunt,⁸
 She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.
 In al the parisshe wyf ne was ther noon
 That to th' offring bifore hir sholde goon; 450
 And if ther dide, certeyn, so wrooth was she,
 That she was out of alle charitee.
 Hir coverchiefs ful fyne were of ground;⁹
 I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
 That on a Sonday were upon hir heed.
 Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
 Ful streite y-teyd, and shoos ful moiste and newe.
 Bold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.

¹ medical authorities ² red ³ blue ⁴ thin silk ⁵ careful
 about spending ⁶ somewhat ⁷ a pity ⁸ skill ⁹ fine texture

She was a worthy womman al hir lyve.
 Housbondes at chirche-dore she hadde fyve, 460
 Withouten ¹ other companye in youthe;
 But therof nedeth nat to speke as nouthe.²
 And thryes hadde she been at Jerusalem;
 She hadde passed many a straunge streem;
 At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,
 In Galice at seint Jame, and at Coloigne.
 She coude muche of wandring by the weye:
 Gat-tothed ³ was she, soothly for to seye.
 Up-on an amblere ⁴ esily she sat,
 Y-wimpled ⁵ wel, and on hir heed an hat 470
 As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;
 A foot-mantel aboute hir hipis large,
 And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.
 In felawschip wel coude she laughe and carpe.⁶
 Of remedies of love she knew perchaunce,
 For she coude of that art the olde daunce.

A good man was ther of religioun,
 And was a povre PERSON ⁷ of a toun;
 But riche he was of holy thoght and werk.
 He was also a lerned man, a clerk, 480
 That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;
 His parisshe ⁸ devoutly wolde he teche.
 Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
 And in adversitee ful pacient;
 And swich he was y-preved ofte sythes.⁹
 Ful looth were him to cursen for his tythes,
 But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,
 Un-to his povre parisshe aboute
 Of his offring, and eek of his substaunce.
 He coude in litel thing han suffisaunce. 490

¹ besides ² at present ³ with teeth far apart
⁵ with a pleated head covering ⁶ talk ⁷ parson
⁹ times

⁴ ambling nag
⁸ parishioners

Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer a-sonder,
 But he ne lafte nat, for reyn ne thonder,
 In siknes nor in meschief,¹ to visyte
 The ferreste in his parisshe, mucche and lyte,²
 Up-on his feet, and in his hand a staf.
 This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,
 That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte;
 Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte;
 And this figure he added eek ther-to,
 That if gold ruste, what shal iren do? 500
 For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,
 No wonder is a lewed³ man to ruste;
 And shame it is, if a preest take keep,⁴
 A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.
 Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,
 By his clenness, how that his sheep shold live.
 He sette nat his benefice to hyre,
 And leet his sheep encombred in the myre,
 And ran to London, un-to sēynt Poules,
 To seken him a chaunterie for soules,⁵ 510
 Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;
 But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,
 So that the wolf ne made it nat miscarie;
 He was a shepherde and no mercenarie.
 And though he holy were, and vertuous,
 He was to sinful man nat despitous,
 Ne of his speche daungerous⁶ ne digne,⁷
 But in his teching discreet and benigne.
 To drawen folk to heven by fairnesse
 By good ensample, was his bisnesse: 520
 But it were any persone obstinat,
 What-so he were, of heigh or lowe estat,
 Him wolde he snibben⁸ sharply for the nones.

¹ trouble ² great and small ³ lay ⁴ should reflect ⁵ to
 seek easier work in saying masses for the dead ⁶ overbearing
⁷ scornful ⁸ reprove

A bettre preest, I trowe that nowher noon is.
 He wayted after no pompe and reverence,
 Ne maked him a spyced ¹ conscience,
 But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
 He taughte, and first he folwed it himselve.

With him ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,
 That hadde y-lad of dong ful many a fother,² 530
 A trewe swinker ³ and a good was he,
 Livinge in pees and parfit charitee.
 God loved he best with al his hole herte
 At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,⁴
 And thanne his neighebour right as himselve.
 He wolde thresshe, and ther-to dyke and delve,
 For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,
 Withouten hyre, if it lay in his might.
 His tythes payed he ful faire and wel,
 Bothe of his propre swink and his catel. 540
 In a tabard ⁵ he rood upon a mere.

Ther was also a Reve ⁶ and a Millere,
 A Somnour ⁷ and a Pardoner ⁸ also,
 A Maunciple,⁹ and my-self; ther were namo.

The MILLER was a stout carl, for the nones,
 Ful big he was of braun, and eek of bones;
 That proved wel,¹⁰ for over-al ther he cam,
 At wrastling he wolde have alwey the ram,¹¹
 He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre,¹²
 Ther nas no dore that he nolde heve ¹³ of harre,¹⁴ 550
 Or breke it, at a renning, with his heed.
 His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,
 And ther-to brood, as though it were a spade.
 Up-on the cop ¹⁵ right of his nose he hade

¹ over-scrupulous ² load ³ laborer ⁴ whether he were gay
 or sad ⁵ sleeveless jerkin ⁶ bailiff ⁷ summoner for the eccle-
 siastical courts ⁸ pedlar of papal indulgences ⁹ steward of a
 college ¹⁰ was clearly proved ¹¹ i.e. the prize ¹² sturdy fellow
¹³ lift ¹⁴ hinge ¹⁵ tip

A werthe, and ther-on stood a tuft of heres,
 Reed as the bristles of a sowes eres;
 His nose-thirles ¹ blake were and wyde.
 A swerd and bokeler bar he by his syde;
 His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys.
 He was a janglere ² and a goliardeys,³ 560
 And that was most of sinne and harlotryes.⁴
 Wel coude he stelen corn, and tollen thryes;⁵
 And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.
 A whyt cote and a blew hood wered he.
 A baggepype wel coude he blowe and sowne,
 And ther-with-al he broghte us out of towne.

A gentil MAUNCIPLE was ther of a temple,⁶
 Of which achatours ⁷ mighte take exemple
 For to be wyse in bying of vitaille
 For whether that he payde, or took by taille,⁸ 570
 Algate he wayted so in his achat,⁹
 That he was ay biforn and in good stat.
 Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace,
 That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace
 The wisdom of an heap of lerned men?
 Of maistres hadde he mo than thryes ten,
 That were of lawe expert and curious;
 Of which ther were a doseyn in that hous
 Worthy to been stiwardes of rente and lond
 Of any lord that is in Engelond, 580
 To make him live by his propre good,
 In honour dettelees, but he were wood,¹⁰
 Or live as scarsly as him list desire;
 And able for to helpen al a shire
 In any cas that mighte falle or happe;
 And yit this maunciple sette hir aller cappe.¹¹

¹ nostrils ² an idler talker ³ coarse jester ⁴ ribaldries
⁵ take triple toll ⁶ one of the Inns of Court ⁷ buyers ⁸ on
 credit ⁹ he always attended so well to his purchase ¹⁰ unless he
 were crazy ¹¹ made fools of them all

The REVE was a sclendre colerik man,
 His berd was shave as ny as ever he can.
 His heer was by his eres round y-shorn.
 His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn,¹ 590
 Ful longe were his legges, and ful lene,
 Y-lyk a staf, ther was no calf y-sene.
 Wel coude he kepe a gerner² and a binne;
 Ther was noon auditour coude on him winne.
 Wel wiste he, by the droghte, and by the reyn,
 The yelding of his seed, and of his greyn.
 His lordes sheep, his neet,³ his dayerye,
 His swyn, his hors, his stoor,⁴ and his pultrye,
 Was hoolly in this reves governing,
 And by his covenaut yaf the rekening, 600
 Sin that his lord was twenty yeer of age;
 Ther coude no man bringe him in arrerage.⁵
 Ther nas baillif, ne herde,⁶ ne other hyne,⁷
 That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;⁸
 They were adrad of him, as of the deeth.
 His woning⁹ was ful fair up-on an heeth,
 With grene treës shadwed was his place.
 He coude bettre than his lord purchace.
 Ful riche he was astored prively,
 His lord wel coude he plesen subtilly, 610
 To yeve and lene him of his owne good,
 And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.
 In youthe he lerned hadde a good mister;¹⁰
 He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.
 This reve sat up-on a ful good stot,¹¹
 That was al pomely¹² grey, and highte Scot.
 A long surcote of pers up-on he hade,

¹ his hair was cut short in front like a priest's ² granary ³ cattle
⁴ stock ⁵ catch him in arrears ⁶ herdsman ⁷ laborer ⁸ trick-
 ery ⁹ house ¹⁰ trade ¹¹ horse ¹² dappled

And by his syde he bar a rusty blade.
 Of Northfolk was this reve, of which I telle,
 Bisyde a toun men clepen Baldeswelle. 620
 Tukked he was, as is a frere, aboute,
 And ever he rood the hindreste of our route.

A SOMNOUR was ther with us in that place,
 That hadde a fyr-reed cherubinnes face,
 For sawcefleem¹ he was, with eyen narwe.²
 As hoot he was, and lecherous, as a sparwe;
 With scalled³ browes blake, and piled⁴ berd;
 Of his visage children were aferd.

Ther nas quik-silver, litarge, ne brimstoon,
 Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon, 630
 Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
 That him mighte helpen of his whelkes⁵ whyte,
 Nor of the knobbes sittinge on his chekes.
 Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,
 And for to drinken strong wyn, reed as blood.
 Than wolde he speke, and crye as he were wood.
 And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
 Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.

A fewe termes hadde he, two or three,
 That he had lerned out of som decree; 640
 No wonder is, he herde it al the day;
 And eek ye knowen wel, how that a jay
 Can clepen "Watte,"⁶ as well as can the pope.
 But who-so coude in other thing him grope,⁷
 Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophye;
 Ay "*Questio quid iuris*" wolde he crye.
 He was a gentil harlot⁸ and a kinde;
 A better felawe sholde men noght finde.
 He wolde suffre, for a quart of wyn,
 A good felawe to have his concubyn 650

¹ pimpled ² close together ³ scabby ⁴ sparse ⁵ pimples
⁶ can cry "Wat." ⁷ test ⁸ rascal

A twelf-month, and excuse him atte fulle:
 Ful prively a finch eek coude he pulle.¹
 And if he fond o-wher a good felawe,
 He wolde techen him to have non awe,
 In swich cas, of the erchedeknes curs,
 But-if a mannes soule were in his purs;
 For in his purs he sholde y-punissched be.
 "Purs is the erchedeknes helle," seyde he.
 But wel I woot he lyed right in dede;
 Of cursing oghte ech gilty man him drede—
 For curs wol slee, right as assoilling² saveth—
 And also war him³ of a *significavit*.⁴
 In daunger⁵ hadde he at his owne gyse⁶
 The yonge girles⁷ of the diocyse,
 And knew hir counseil, and was al hir reed.
 A gerland hadde he set up-on his heed,
 As greet as it were for an ale-stake;⁸
 A bokeler hadde he maad him of a cake.

660

With him ther rood a gentil PARDONER
 Of Rouncival, his freend and his compeer,
 That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.
 Ful loude he song, "Com hider, love, to me."
 This somnour bar to him a stif burdoun,⁹
 Was never trompe of half so greet a soun.
 This pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,
 But smothe it heng, as dooth a strike of flex;
 By ounces¹⁰ henge his lokkes that he hadde,
 And ther-with he his shuldres overspradde;
 But thinne it lay, by colpons¹¹ oon and oon;
 But hood, for jolitee, ne wered he noon,
 For it was trussed up in his walet.

670

680

Him thoughte, he rood al of the newe jet;¹²

¹ fleece a simple-minded person ² absolution ³ let him beware
⁴ writ of excommunication ⁵ in his power ⁶ way ⁷ persons
⁸ sign of an ale-house ⁹ strong accompaniment ¹⁰ small
 strands ¹¹ shreds ¹² fashion

Dischevele, save his cappe, he rood al bare.
 Swiche glaringe eyen hadde he as an hare.
 A vernicle ¹ hadde he sowed on his cappe.
 His walet lay biforn him in his lappe,
 Bret-ful ² of pardoun come from Rome al hoot.
 A voys he hadde as smial as hath a goot.
 No berd hadd he, ne never sholde have,
 As smothe it was as it were late y-shave; 690
 I trowe he were a gelding or a mare.
 But of his craft, fro Berwik into Ware,
 Ne was ther swich another pardoner.
 For in his male ³ he hadde a pilwe-beer, ⁴
 Which that, he seyde, was our lady ⁵ veyl:
 He seyde, he hadde a gobet of the seyl
 That sëynt Peter hadde, whan that he wente
 Up-on the see, til Jesu Crist him hente.
 He hadde a croys of latoun, ⁶ ful of stones,
 And in a glas he hadde pigges bones. 700
 But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
 A povre person dwelling up-on lond,
 Up-on a day he gat him more moneye
 Than that the person gat in monthes tweye.
 And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes, ⁷
 He made the person and the peple his apes.
 But trewely to tellen, atte laste,
 He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.
 Wel coude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
 But alderbest ⁸ he song an offertorie; 710
 For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
 He moste preche, and wel affyle ⁹ his tonge,
 To winne silver, as he ful wel coude;
 Therefore he song so meriely and loude.

¹ a St. Veronica handkerchief, showing the face of Christ ² brim-
 ful ³ wallet ⁴ pillow-case ⁵ the Virgin's ⁶ a kind of brass
⁷ tricks ⁸ best of all ⁹ smooth

Now have I told you shortly, in a clause,
 Th'estat, th'array, the nombre, and eek the cause
 Why that assembled was this companye
 In Southwerk, at this gentil hostelrye,
 That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.
 But now is tyme to yow for to telle 720
 How that we baren us that ilke night,
 Whan we were in that hostelrye alight.
 And after wol I telle of our viage,
 And al the remenaunt of our pilgrimage.
 But first I pray yow, of your curteisye,
 That ye n'arette it nat my vileinye,¹
 Thogh that I pleynly speke in this matere,
 To telle yow hir wordes and hir chere ²
 Ne thogh I speke hir wordes properly.
 For this ye knowen al-so wel as I, 730
 Who-so shal telle a tale after a man,
 He moot reherce, as ny as ever he can,
 Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
 Al speke he never so rudeliche and large;³
 Or elles he moot telle his tale untrewe
 Or feyne thing, or finde wordes newe.
 He may nat spare, al-though he were his brother;
 He moot as wel seye o word as another.
 Crist spak him-self ful brode in holy writ,
 And wel ye woot, no vileinye is it. 740
 Eek Plato seith, who-so that can him rede,
 The wordes mote be cosin to the dede.
 Also I'prey yow to foryeve it me,
 Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
 Here in this tale, as that they sholde stonde;
 My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.

Greet chere made our hoste us everichon,
 And to the soper sette us anon;

¹ that you do not ascribe it to my bad manners
³ coarsely

² behavior

And served us with vitaille at the beste.
 Strong was the wyn, and wel to drinke us leste.¹ 750
 A semely man our hoste was with-alle
 For to han been a marshal in an halle;
 A large man he was with eyen stepe,²
 A fairer burgeys is ther noon in Chepe:
 Bold of his speche, and wys, and wel y-taught,
 And of manhod him lakkede right naught.
 Eek therto he was right a mery man,
 And after soper pleyen he bigan,
 And spak of mirthe amonges othere thinges,
 Whan that we hadde maad our rekeninges; 760
 And seyde thus: "Now, lordinges, trewely,
 Ye been to me right welcome hertely:
 For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
 I ne saugh this yeer so mery a companye
 At ones in this herberwe³ as is now.
 Fayn wolde I doon yow mirthe, wiste I how.
 And of a mirthe I am right now bithoght,
 To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.
 Ye goon to Caunterbury; God yow spede,
 The blisful martir quyte yow your mede.⁴ 770
 And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
 Ye shapen yow to talen⁵ and to pleye;
 For trewely, confort ne mirthe is noon
 To ryde by the weye doumb as a stoon;
 And therfore wol I maken yow disport,
 As I seyde erst,⁶ and doon yow som confort.
 And if yow lyketh alle, by oon assent,
 Now for to stonden at my jugement,
 And for to werken as I shal yow seye,
 To-morwe, whan ye ryden by the weye, 780
 Now, by my fader soule, that is deed,

¹ we were pleased
stories

⁶ earlier

² glittering

³ inn

⁴ reward you

⁵ tell

And of our tales juge and reportour
 And sette a soper at a certeyn prys;
 And we wold reuled been at his devys,
 In heigh and lowe; and thus, by oon assent,
 We been acorded to his jugement.
 And ther-up-on the wyn was fet¹ anon;
 We dronken, and to reste wente echon, 820
 With-outen any lenger taryinge.

A-morwe, whan that day bigan to springe,
 Up roos our host, and was our aller cok,²
 And gadrede us togidre, alle in a flock,
 And forth we riden, a litel more than pas,³
 Un-to the watering of seint Thomas.
 And there our host bigan his hors areste,
 And seyde; "Lordinges, herkneth, if yow leste.
 Ye woot your forward,⁴ and I it yow recorde.
 If even-song and morwe-song acorde,⁵ 830
 Lat see now who shal telle the firste tale.

As ever mote I drinke wyn or ale,
 Who-so be rebel to my jugement
 Shal paye for al that by the weye is spent.
 Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twinne;⁶
 He which that hath the shortest shal biginne.
 "Sire knight," quod he, "my maister and my lord,
 Now draweth cut, for that is myn acord.
 Cometh neer," quod he, "my lady prioress;
 And ye, sir clerk, lat be your shamfastnesse, 840
 Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man."

Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
 And shortly for to tellen, as it was,
 Were it by aventure,⁷ or sort,⁸ or cas,⁹
 The sothe¹⁰ is this, the cut fil to the knight,

¹ fetched ² the cock who aroused us all ³ a little faster than
 a walk ⁴ agreement ⁵ if you feel the same now as you did last
 night ⁶ go ⁷ accident ⁸ destiny ⁹ chance ¹⁰ truth

Of which ful blythe and glad was every wight;
 And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,
 By forward and by composicioun,¹
 As ye han hard; what nedeth wordes mo?
 And whan this gode man saugh it was so,
 As he that wys was and obedient
 To kepe his forward by his free assent,
 He seyde: "Sin I shal beginne the game,
 What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!
 Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."

850

And with that word we riden forth our weye;
 And he bigan with right a mery chere
 His tale anon, and seyde in this manere.

Here endeth the prolog of this book

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

*Here biginneth the Nonne Preestes Tale of the Cok and
 Hen, Chauntecleer and Pertelote.*

A povre widwe, somdel stape² in age,
 Was whylom dwelling in a narwe cotage,
 Bisyde a grove, standing in a dale.
 This widwe, of which I telle yow my tale,
 Sin thilke day that she was last a wyf,
 In pacience ladde a ful simple lyf,
 For litel was hir catel³ and hir rente;
 By housbondrye,⁴ of such as God hir sente,
 She fond⁵ hir-self, and eek hir doghtren two.
 Three large sowes hadde she, and namo,
 Three kyn, and eek a sheep that highte⁶ Malle,
 Ful sooty was hir bour,⁷ and eek hir halle,
 In which she eet ful many a sclendre meel.

10

¹ compact ² advanced ³ property ⁴ economy ⁵ provided
 for ⁶ was called ⁷ bed-chamber

Of poynaunt sauce hir neded never a deel.
 No deyntee morsel passed thurgh hir throte;
 Hir dyete was accordant to ¹ hir cote.
 Repleccioun ne made hir never syk;
 Attempre ² dyete was al hir phisyk,
 And exercyse, and hertes suffisaunce.³
 The goute lette ⁴ hir no-thing ⁵ for to daunce, 20
 N'apoplexye shonte ⁶ nat hir heed;
 No wyn ne drank she, neither whyt ne reed;
 Hir bord was served most with whyt and blak,
 Milk and broun breed, in which she fond no lak,
 Seynd ⁷ bacoun, and somtyme an ey ⁸ or tweye,
 For she was as it were a maner deye.⁹

A yerd she hadde, enclosed al aboute
 With stikkes, and a drye dich with-oute,
 In which she hadde a cok, hight Chauntecleer,
 In al the land of crowing nas ¹⁰ his peer. 30
 His vois was merier than the mery orgon
 On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon;
 Wel sikerer ¹¹ was his crowing in his logge,
 Than is a klokke, or an abbey orlogge.¹²
 By nature knew he ech ascencioun
 Of equinoxial in thilke toun;
 For whan degrees fiftene were ascended,¹³
 Thanne crew he, that it mighte nat ben amended.
 His comb was redder than the fyn coral,
 And batailed, as it were a castel-wal. 40
 His bile was blak, and as the jeet ¹⁴ it shoon;
 Lyk asur were his legges, and his toon;
 His nayles whytter than the lilie flour,
 And lyk the burned gold was his colour.
 This gentil cok hadde in his governaunce

¹ in keeping with ² temperate ³ contentment ⁴ hindered
⁵ not at all ⁶ injured ⁷ broiled ⁸ egg ⁹ dairy woman
¹⁰ was not ¹¹ more reliable ¹² clock ¹³ every hour ¹⁴ jet

Sevene hennes, for to doon al his plesaunce,
 Whiche were his sustres and his paramours,
 And wonder lyk to him, as of colours.
 Of whiche the faireste hewed on hir throte
 Was cleped faire damoysele Pertelote. 50

Curteys she was, discreet, and debonaire,
 And compaignable, and bar hir-self so faire,
 Sin thilke day that she was seven night old,
 That trewely she hath the herte in hold
 Of Chauntecleer loken¹ in every lith;²
 He loved hir so, that wel was him therwith.
 But such a joye was it to here hem singe,
 Whan that the brighte sonne gan to springe,
 In swete accord, "my lief is faren³ in londe."
 For thilke tyme, as I have understonde, 60
 Bestes and briddes coude speke and singe.

And so bifel, that in a daweninge,
 As Chauntecleer among his wyves alle
 Sat on his perche, that was in the halle,
 And next him sat this faire Pertelote,
 This Chauntecleer gan gronen in his throte,
 As man that in his dreem is drecched⁴ sore.
 And whan that Pertelote thus herde him rore,
 She was agast, and seyde, "O herte dere,
 What eyleth yow, to grone in this manere? 70
 Ye been a verray sleper, fy for shame!"
 And he answerde and seyde thus, "madame,
 I pray yow, that ye take it nat a-grief:
 By god, me mette⁵ I was in swich meschief
 Right now, that yet myn herte is sore afright.
 Now god," quod he, "my swevene⁶ recche⁷ aright,
 And keep my body out of foul prisoun!
 Me mette, how that I romed up and down

¹ locked ² limb ³ gone ⁴ troubled ⁵ I dreamed ⁶ dream
⁷ interpret

Withinne our yerde, wher-as I saugh a beste,
Was lyk an hound, and wolde han maad areste 80
Upon my body, and wolde han had me deed.

His colour was bitwixe yelwe and reed;
And tipped was his tail, and bothe his eres,
With blak, unlyk the remenant of his heres;
His snowte smal, with glowinge eyen tweye.
Yet of his look for fere almost I deye;
This caused me my groning, doutelees."

"Avoy!" quod she, "fy on yow, hertelees!
Allas!" quod she, "for, by that god above,
Now han ye lost myn herte and al my love; 90
I can nat love a coward, by my feith.

For certes, what so any womman seith,
We alle desyren, if it mighte be,
To han housbondes hardy, wyse, and free,¹
And secree, and no nigard, ne no fool,
Ne him that is agast of every tool,²
Ne noon avauntour,³ by that god above!
How dorste ye seyn for shame unto your love,
That any thing mighte make yow aferd?
Have ye no mannes herte, and han a berd? 100

Allas! and conne ye been agast of swevenis?
No-thing, god wot, but vanitee,⁴ in sweven is.
Swevenes engendren of ⁵ replecciouns,⁶
And ofte of fume,⁷ and of complecciouns,⁸
Whan humours been to habundant in a wight.
Certes this dreem, which ye han met to-night,
Cometh of the grete superfluitee
Of youre rede colera,⁹ pardee,
Which causeth folk to dreden in here dremes
Of arwes, and of fyr with rede lemes,¹⁰ 110

¹ generous ² weapon ³ boaster ⁴ emptiness ⁵ are caused
by ⁶ overeating ⁷ gas on the stomach ⁸ temperament ⁹ red
bile ¹⁰ flames

Of grete bestes, that they wol hem byte,
 Of contek,¹ and of whelpes grete and lyte;
 Right as the humour of malencolye²
 Causeth ful many a man, in sleep, to crye,
 For fere of blake beres, or boles³ blake,
 Or elles, blake develes wole hem take.
 Of othere humours coude I telle also,
 That werken many a man in sleep ful wo;
 But I wol passe as lightly as I can.

Lo Catoun, which that was so wys a man, 120
 Seyde he nat thus, ne do no fors⁴ of dremes?
 Now, sire," quod she, "whan we flee fro the bemes,
 For Goddes love, as tak som laxatyf;
 Up peril of my soule, and of my lyf,
 I counseille yow the beste, I wol nat lye,
 That bothe of colere and of malencolye
 Ye purge yow; and for ye shul nat tarie,
 Though in this toun is noon apotecarie,
 I shall my-self to herbes techen yow,
 That shul ben for your hele, and for your prow;⁵ 130
 And in our yerd tho herbes shal I finde,
 The whiche han of hir propretee, by kinde,⁶
 To purgen yow binethe, and eek above.
 Forget not this, for goddes owene love!
 Ye been ful colerik of compleccioun.
 Ware the sonne in his ascencioun
 Ne fynde yow nat repleet of humours hote;
 And if it do, I dar wel leye a grote,
 That ye shul have a fevere terciane,
 Or an agu, that may be youre bane. 140
 A day or two ye shul have digestyves
 Of wormes, er ye take your laxatyves,
 Of lauriol, centaure, and fumetere,
 Or elles of ellebor, that groweth there,

¹ strife ² black bile ³ bulls ⁴ pay no attention to ⁵ ad-
 vantage ⁶ nature

Of catapuce, or of gaytres beryis,
 Of erbe yve,¹ growing in our yerd, that mery is;
 Pekke hem up right as they growe, and ete hem in.
 Be mery, housbond, for your fader kin!
 Dredeth no dreem; I can say yow namore."

"Madame," quod he, "*graunt mercy*² of your
 lore. 150

But nathelees, as touching daun Catoun,
 That hath of wisdom such a greet renoun,
 Though that he bad no dremes for to drede,
 By god, men may in olde bokes rede
 Of many a man, more of auctoritee
 Than ever Catoun was, so mote I thee,³
 That al the revers seyn of his sentence,
 And han wel founden by experience,
 That dremes ben significaciouns,
 As wel of joye as tribulaciouns 160
 That folk enduren in this lyf present.
 Ther nedeth make of this noon argument;
 The verray preve⁴ sheweth it in dede.

Oon of the gretteste auctours that men rede
 Seith thus, that whylom two felawes wente
 On pilgrimage, in a ful good entente;
 And happed so, thay come into a toun,
 Wher-as ther was swich congregacioun
 Of peple, and eek so streit of herbergage⁵
 That they ne founde as muche as o cotage 170
 In which they bothe mighte y-logged be.
 Wherfor thay mosten, of necessitee,
 As for that night, departen compaignye;
 And ech of hem goth to his hostelrye,
 And took his logging, as it wolde falle.
 That oon of hem was logged in a stalle,

¹ medicinal herbs ² many thanks ³ prosper ⁴ proof ⁵ lim-
 ited in its lodgings

Fer in a yerd, with oxen of the plough;
 That other man was logged wel y-nough,
 As was his aventure, or his fortune,
 That us governeth alle as in commune. 180

And so bifel, that, longe er it were day,
 This man mette in his bed, ther-as he lay,
 How that his felawe gan up-on him calle,
 And seyde, 'allas! for in an oxes stalle
 This night I shal be mordred ther I lye.
 Now help me, dere brother, er I dye;
 In alle haste com to me,' he sayde.
 This man out of his sleep for fere abrayde;¹
 But whan that he was wakned of his sleep,
 He turned him, and took of this no keep;² 190
 Him thoughte his dreem nas but a vanitee.
 Thus twyës in his sleping dremed he.

And atte thridde tyme yet his felawe
 Cam, as him thoughte, and seide, 'I am now slawc;
 Bihold my bloody woundes, depe and wyde!
 Arys up erly in the morwe-tyde,
 And at the west gate of the toun,' quod he,
 'A carte ful of dong ther shaltow see,
 In which my body is hid ful prively;
 Do thilke carte aresten boldely. 200

My gold caused my mordre, sooth to sayn';
 And tolde him every poynt how he was slayn,
 With a ful pitous face, pale of hewe.
 And truste wel, his dreem he fond ful trewe;
 For on the morwe, as sone as it was day,
 To his felawes in he took the way;
 And whan that he came to this oxes stalle,
 After his felawe he bigan to calle.

The hostiler answered him anon,
 And seyde, 'sire, your felawe is agon, 210
 As sone as day he wente out of the toun.'

¹ started ² thought

This man gan fallen in suspecioun,
 Remembring on his dremes that he mette,
 And forth he goth, no lenger wolde he lette,¹
 Unto the west gate of the toun, and fond
 A dong-carte, as it were to donge lond,
 That was arrayed in the same wyse
 As ye han herd the dede man devyse;
 And with an hardy herte he gan to crye
 Vengeaunce and justice of this felonye:—

220

'My felawe mordred is this same night,
 And in this carte he lyth gapinge upright.
 I crye out on the ministres,' quod he,
 'That sholden kepe and reulen this citee;
 Harrow! allas! her lyth my felawe slayn!
 What sholde I more un-to this tale sayn?
 The peple out-sterter, and caste the cart to grounde,
 And in the middel of the dong they founde
 The dede man, that mordred was al newe.

O blisful god, that art so just and trewe!

230

Lo, how that thou biwreyest ² mordre alway!

Mordre wol out, that see we day by day.

Mordre is so wlatson ³ and abhominable

To god, that is so just and resonable,

That he ne wol nat suffre it heled ⁴ be;

Though it abyde a yeer, or two, or three,

Mordre wol out, this my conclusioun.

And right anoon, ministres of that toun

Han hent the carter, and so sore him pyned,⁵

And eek the hostiler so sore engyned,⁶

240

That thay biknewe ⁷ hir wikkednesse anoon,

And were an-hanged by the nekke-boon.

Here may men seen that dremes been to drede.

And certes, in the same book I rede,

¹ delay
⁶ racked

² revealed
⁷ confessed

³ heinous

⁴ concealed

⁵ tortured

Right in the nexte chapitre after this,
 (I gabbe ¹ nat, so have I joye or blis,)
 Two men that wolde han passed over see,
 For certeyn cause, in-to a fer contree,
 If that the wind ne hadde been contrarie,
 That made hem in a citee for to tarie, 250
 That stood ful mery upon an haven-syde.
 But on a day, agayn the even-tyde,
 The wind gan chaunge, and blew right as hem leste.
 Jolif and glad they wente un-to hir reste,
 And casten hem ² ful erly for to saille;
 But to that oo ³ man fil a greet mervaille.
 That oon of hem, in sleping as he lay,
 Him mette a wonder dreem, agayn the day;
 Him thoughte a man stood by his beddes syde,
 And him comaunded, that he sholde abyde, 260
 And seyde him thus, 'if thou to-morwe wende,
 Thou shalt be dreynt; ⁴ my tale is at an ende.'
 He wook, and tolde his felawe what he mette,
 And preyde him his viage for to lette;
 As for that day, he preyde him to abyde.
 His felawe, that lay by his beddes syde,
 Gan for to laughe, and scorned him ful faste.
 'No dreem,' quod he, 'may so myn herte agaste,
 That I wol lette for to do my thinges.
 I sette not a straw by thy dreminges, 270
 For swevenes been but vanitees and japes.⁵
 Men dreme al-day of owles or of apes,
 And eke of many a mase ⁶ therwithal;
 Men dreme of thing that never was ne shal.
 But sith I see that thou wolt heer abyde,
 And thus for-sleuthen ⁷ wilfully thy tyde,
 God wot it reweth me,⁸ and have good day.'

¹ lie ² they planned ³ one ⁴ drowned ⁵ jests ⁶ be-
 wilderment ⁷ waste ⁸ I am sorry

And thus he took his leve, and wente his way.
 But er that he hadde halfe his cours y-seyled,
 Noot I nat why, ne what mischaunce it eyled, 280
 But casuely ¹ the shippes botme rente,
 And ship and man under the water wente
 In sighte of othere shippes it byside,
 That with hem seyled at the same tyde.
 And therfor, faire Pertelote so dere,
 By swiche ensamples olde maistow ² lere,
 That no man sholde been to recchelees
 Of dremes, for I sey thee, doutelees,
 That many a dreem ful sore is for to drede.

Lo, in the lyf of seint Kenelm, I rede, 290
 That was Kenulphus sone, the noble king
 Of Mercenrike,³ how Kenelm mette a thing;
 A lyte er ⁴ he was mordred, on a day,
 His mordre in his avisioun he say.⁵
 His norice ⁶ him expounded every del
 His sweven, and bad him for to kepe him wel
 For ⁷ traisoun; but he nas but seven yeer old,
 And therefore litel tale hath he told
 Of any dreem, so holy was his herte.
 By god, I hadde lever than my sherte 300
 That ye had rad his legende, as have I.
 Dame Pertelote, I sey yow trewely,
 Macrobeus, that writ th'avisioun
 In Affrike of the worthy Cipioun,
 Affermeth dremes, and seith that they been
 Warning of thinges that men after seen.

And forther-more, I pray yow loketh wel
 In th'olde testament, of Daniel,
 If he held dremes any vanitee.
 Reed eek of Joseph, and ther shul ye see 310

¹ accidentally ² mayest thou ³ Mercia ⁴ a little while be-
 fore ⁵ saw ⁶ nurse ⁷ for fear of

Wher dremes ben somtyme (I sey nat alle)
 Warning of thinges that shul after falle.
 Loke of Egipt the king, daun¹ Pharao,
 His bakere and his boteler also,
 Wher they ne felte noon effect in dremes.
 Who-so wol seken actes of sondry remes,²
 May rede of dremes many a wonder thing.

Lo Cresus, which that was of Lyde³ king,
 Mette he nat that he sat upon a tree,
 Which signified he sholde anhangd be? 320
 Lo heer Andromacha, Ectores wyf,
 That day that Ector sholde lese⁴ his lyf,
 She dremed on the same night biforn,
 How that the lyf of Ector sholde be lorn,
 If thilke day he wente in-to bataille;
 She warned him, but it mighte nat availle;
 He wente for to fighte nathelees,
 But he was slayn anoon of Achilles.
 But thilke tale is al to long to telle,
 And eek it is ny⁵ day, I may nat dwelle. 330

Shortly I seye, as for conclusioun,
 That I shal han of this avisioun
 Adversitee; and I seye forther-more,
 That I ne telle of laxatyves no store,⁶
 For they ben venimous, I woot it wel;
 I hem defye, I love hem never a del.⁷

Now let us speke of mirthe, and stinte⁸ al this;
 Madame Pertelote, so have I blis,
 Of o thing god hath sent me large grace;
 For whan I see the beautee of your face, 340
 Ye ben so scarlet-reed about your yën,
 It maketh al my drede for to dyen;
 For, also siker⁹ as *In principio*,

¹ lord ² realms ³ Lydia ⁴ lose ⁵ almost ⁶ have no
 faith in ⁷ never a bit ⁸ cease ⁹ just as sure

*Mulier est hominis confusio;*¹

Madame, the sentence² of this Latin is—

Womman is mannes joye and al his blis.

For whan I fele a-night your softe syde,

Al-be-it that I may nat on you ryde,

For that our perche is maad so narwe, alas!

I am so ful of joye and of solas

350

That I defye bothe sweven and dreem.”

And with that word he fley doun fro the beem,

For it was day, and eek his hennes alle;

And with a chuk he gan hem for to calle,

For he had founde a corn, lay in the yerd.

Royal he was, he was namore aferd;

He fethered Pertelote twenty tyme,

And trad as ofte, er that it was pryme.

He loketh as it were a grim leoun;

And on his toos he rometh up and doun,

360

Him deynded not to sette his foot to grounde.

He chukketh, whan he hath a corn y-founde,

And to him rennen thanne his wyves alle.

Thus royal, as a prince is in his halle,

Leve I this Chauntecleer in his pasture;

And after wol I telle his aventure.

Whan that the month in which the world bigan,

That highte March, whan god first maked man,

Was complet, and passed were also,

Sin March bigan, thritty dayes and two,

370

Bifel that Chauntecleer, in al his pryde,

His seven wyves walking by his syde,

Caste up his eyen to the brighte sonne,

That in the signe of Taurus hadde y-ronne

Twenty degrees and oon, and somewhat more;

¹ “Woman is man’s undoing.” Chauntecleer translates it incorrectly on purpose. ² meaning

And knew by kynde,¹ and by noon other lore,²
 That it was pryme,³ and crew with blisful stevene.⁴
 "The sonne," he sayde, "is clomben up on hevene
 Fourty degrees and oon, and more, y-wis.⁵

Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis, 380
 Herkneth thise blisful briddes how they singe,
 And see the fresshe floures how they springe;
 Ful is myn herte of revel and solas."

But sodeinly him fil a sorweful cas;⁶
 For ever the latter ende of joye is wo.
 God woot that worldly joye is sone ago;⁷
 And if a rethor⁸ coude faire endyte,
 He in a cronique saufly⁹ mighte it wryte,
 As for a sovereyn notabilitee.¹⁰

Now every wys man, lat him herkne me; 390
 This storie is al-so trewe, I undertake,
 As is the book of Launcelot de Lake,
 That wommen holde in ful gret reverence.
 Now wol I torne agayn to my sentence.

A col-fox,¹¹ ful of sly iniquitee,
 That in the grove hadde woned¹² yeres three,
 By heigh imaginacioun forn-cast,¹³
 The same night thurgh-out the hegges¹⁴ brast¹⁵
 Into the yerd, ther Chauntecleer the faire
 Was wont, and eek his wyves, to reparaire; 400
 And in a bed of wortes¹⁶ stille he lay,
 Til it was passed undern¹⁷ of the day,
 Wayting his tyme on Chauntecleer to falle,
 As gladly doon thise homicydes alle,
 That in awayt liggen¹⁸ to mordre men.
 O false mordrer, lurking in thy den!

¹ nature ² no other teaching ³ nine o'clock ⁴ voice ⁵ cer-
 tainly ⁶ a sad accident befell him ⁷ gone ⁸ rhetorician
⁹ safely ¹⁰ wonder ¹¹ black fox ¹² lived ¹³ destined by God
¹⁴ hedges ¹⁵ burst ¹⁶ herbs ¹⁷ middle of the forenoon ¹⁸ lie

O newe Scariot, newe Genilon!¹
 False dissimilour,² O Greek Sinon,
 That broghtest Troye al outrelly³ to sorwe!
 O Chauntecleer, acursed be that morwe, 410
 That thou into that yerd flough fro the bemes!
 Thou were ful wel y-warned by thy dremes,
 That thilke day was perilous to thee.
 But what that god forwoot mot nedes be,⁴
 After the opinioun of certeyn clerkis.
 Witnesse on him,⁵ that any perfit clerk is,
 That in scole is gret altercacioun
 In this matere, and greet disputisoun,
 And hath ben of an hundred thousand men.
 But I ne can not bulte it to the bren,⁶ 420
 As can the holy doctour Augustyn,
 Or Boëce,⁷ or the bishop Bradwardyn,⁸
 Whether that goddes worthy forwiting
 Streyneth⁹ me nedely¹⁰ for to doon a thing,
 (Nedely clepe I simple necessitee);
 Or elles, if free choys be graunted me
 To do that same thing, or do it noght,
 Though god forwoot it, er that it was wrought;
 Or if his witing streyneth nevere a del
 But by necessitee condicionel. 430
 I wol not han to do of swich matere;
 My tale is of a cok, as ye may here,
 That took his counseil of his wyf, with sorwe,
 To walken in the yerd upon that morwe
 That he had met the dreem, that I yow tolde.
 Wommennes counseils been ful ofte colde;¹¹
 Wommannes counseil broghte us first to wo,

¹ Ganelon, traitor in the *Song of Roland* ² dissembler ³ com-
 pletely ⁴ what God foreknows must be ⁵ let him be a witness
⁶ sift the matter ⁷ Boethius ⁸ fourteenth century English
 theologian ⁹ constrains ¹⁰ necessity ¹¹ harmful

And made Adam fro paradys to go,
 Ther-as he was ful mery, and wel at ese.—
 But for I noot, to whom it mighte displese, 440
 If I counseil of wommen wolde blame,
 Passe over, for I seyde it in my game.¹
 Rede auctours,² wher they trete of swich matere,
 And what thay seyn of wommen ye may here.
 Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne;
 I can noon harm of no womman divyne.—

Faire in the sond, to bathe hir merily,
 Lyth Pertelote, and alle hir sustres by,
 Agayn the sonne; and Chauntecleer so free
 Song merier than the mermayde in the see; 450
 For Phisiologus³ seith sikerly,
 How that they singen wel and merily.
 And so bifel that, as he caste his yë,
 Among the wortes, on a boterflye,
 He was war of this fox that lay ful lowe.
 No-thing ne liste him thanne for to crowe,⁴
 But cryde anon, “cok, cok,” and up he sterte,
 As man that was affrayed in his herte.
 For naturelly a beest desyreth flee
 Fro his contrarie, if he may it see, 460
 Though he never erst⁵ had seyn it with his yë.

This Chauntecleer, whan he gan him espye,
 He wolde han fled, but that the fox anon
 Seyde, “Gentil sire, allas! wher wol ye gon?
 Be ye affrayed of me that am your freend?
 Now certes, I were worse than a feend,
 If I to yow wolde harm or vileinye.
 I am nat come your counseil⁶ for t’espye;⁷
 But trewely, the cause of my cominge
 Was only for to herkne how that ye singe. 470

¹ in sport ² authors ³ a book of animal fables ⁴ Then he
 did not at all want to crow ⁵ before ⁶ secrets ⁷ spy out

For trewely ye have as mery a stevene ¹
 As eny aungel hath, that is in hevene;
 Therwith ye han in musik more felinge
 Than hadde Boëce, or any that can singe.
 My lord your fader (god his soule blesse!)
 And eek your moder, of hir gentillesse,
 Han in myn hous y-been, to my gret ese;
 And certes, sire, ful fayn wolde I yow plese.
 But for men speke of singing, I wol saye,
 So mote I brouke ² wel myn eyen tweye, 480
 Save yow, I herde never man so singe,
 As dide your fader in the morweninge;
 Certes, it was of herte, al that he song.
 And for to make his voys the more strong,
 He wolde so payne him, that with bothe his yën
 He moste winke, so loude he wolde cryen,
 And stonden on his tiptoon ther-with-al,
 And strecche forth his nekke long and smal.
 And eek he was of swich discrecioun,
 That ther nas no man in no regioun 490
 That him in song or wisdom mighte passe.
 I have wel rad in daun Burnel the Asse,³
 Among his vers, how that ther was a cok,
 For that a preestes sone yaf him a knock
 Upon his leg, whyl he was yong and nyce,
 He made him for to lese ⁴ his benefyce.
 But certeyn, ther nis no comparisoun
 Bitwix the wisdom and discrecioun
 Of youre fader, and of his subtiltee.
 Now singeth, sire, for seinte Charitee, 500
 Let see, conne ye your fader countrefete?' ⁵
 This Chauntecleer his winges gan to bete,

¹ voice ² have the use of ³ a twelfth century Latin satirical poem
⁴ lose ⁵ imitate

As man that coude his tresoun nat espye,
So was he ravished with his flaterye.

Allas! ye lordes, many a fals flatour
Is in your courtes, and many a losengeour,¹
That plesen yow wel more, by my feith,
Than he that soothfastnesse² unto yow seith.
Redeth Ecclesiaste of flaterye;
Beth³ war, ye lordes, of hir trecherye. 510

This Chauntecleer stood hye up-on his toos,
Strecching his nekke, and heeld his eyen cloos,
And gan to crowe loude for the nones;⁴
And daun Russel the fox sterte up at ones,
And by the gargat⁵ hente Chauntecleer,
And on his bak toward the wode him beer,
For yet ne was ther no man that him sewed.⁶
O destinee, that mayst nat been eschewed!⁷
Allas, that Chauntecleer fleigh fro the bemes!
Allas, his wyf ne roghte nat⁸ of dremes! 520
And on a Friday fil al this meschaunce.

O Venus, that art goddesse of pleasaunce,
Sin that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,
And in thy service dide al his poweer,
More for delyt, than world to multiplie,
Why woldestow⁹ suffre him on thy day to dye?
O Gaufred,¹⁰ dere mayster soverayn,
That, whan thy worthy king Richard was slayn
With shot, compleynedest his deth so sore,
Why ne hadde I¹¹ now thy sentence and thy lore, 530
The Friday for to chyde, as diden ye?
(For on a Friday soothly slayn was he.)
Than wolde I shewe yow how that I coude pleyne¹²
For Chauntecleres drede, and for his peyne.

¹ deceiver ² truth ³ be ⁴ for the nonce ⁵ throat ⁶ pursued
⁷ avoided ⁸ paid no attention to ⁹ wouldst thou
¹⁰ Geoffrey of Vinsaul, who wrote in Latin a treatise on the art of poetry containing a lament for Richard I ¹¹ had I not ¹² lament

Certes, swich cry ne lamentacioun
 Was never of ladies maad, whan Ilioun
 Was wonne, and Pirrus with his streite swerd,
 Whan he hadde hent ¹ king Priam by the berd,
 And slayn him (as saith us *Eneydos*),
 As maden alle the hennes in the clos, 540
 Whan they had seyn of Chauntecleer the sighte.
 But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighthe,
 Ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,
 Whan that hir housbond hadde lost his lyf,
 And that the Romainys hadde brend ² Cartage;
 She was so ful of torment and of rage,
 That wilfully into the fyr she sterte,³
 And brende hir-selven with a stedfast herte.
 O woful hennes, right so cryden ye,
 As, whan that Nero brende the citee 550
 Of Rome, cryden senatoures wyves,
 For that hir housbondes losten alle hir lyves;
 Withouten gilt this Nero hath hem slayn.
 Now wol I torne to my tale agayn:—
 This sely ⁴ widwe, and eek ⁵ hir doghtres two,
 Herden thise hennes crye and maken wo,
 And out at dores sterten they anoon,
 And syen the fox toward the grove goon,
 And bar upon his bak the cok away;
 And cryden, "Out! harrow! and weylaway! 560
 Ha, ha, the fox!" and after him they ran,
 And eek with staves many another man;
 Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerland,
 And Malkin, with a distaf in hir hand;
 Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges
 So were they fered for ⁶ berking of the dogges
 And shouting of the men and wimmen eke,

¹ seized ² burned ³ leaped ⁴ luckless ⁵ also ⁶ fright-
 tened by

They ronne so, hem thoughte hir herte breke.
 They yelleden as feendes doon in helle;
 The dokes cryden as ¹ men wolde hem quelle; ² 570
 The gees for fere flowen over the trees;
 Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees;
 So hideous was the noyse, a! *benedicite!*
 Certes, he Jakke Straw,³ and his meynee,⁴
 Ne made never shoutes half so shrille,
 Whan that they wolden any Fleming⁵ kille,
 As thilke day was maad upon the fox.
 Of bras thay broghten bemes,⁶ and of box,⁷
 Of horn, of boon, in whiche they blewe and pouped,
 And therwithal thay shryked and they houped; 580
 It semed as that heven sholde falle.
 Now, gode men, I pray yow herkneth alle!

Lo, how fortune turneth sodeinly
 The hope and pryde eek of hir enemy!
 This cok, that lay upon the foxes bak,
 In al his drede, un-to the fox he spak,
 And seyde, "sire, if that I were as ye,
 Yet sholde I seyn (as wis ⁸ god helpe me),
 Turneth agayn, ye proude cherles alle!
 A verray pestilence up-on yow falle! 590
 Now am I come un-to this wodes syde,
 Maugree ⁹ your heed, the cok shal heer abyde;
 I wol him ete in feith, and that anon."—
 The fox answerde, "in feith, it shal be don,"—
 And as he spak that word, al sodeinly
 This cok brak from his mouth deliverly,¹⁰
 And heighe up-on a tree he fleigh anon.
 And whan the fox saugh that he was y-gon,
 "Allas!" quod he, "O Chauntecleer, allas!

¹ as if ² kill ³ leader of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 ⁴ com-
 pany ⁵ Many Flemings were London tradesmen. ⁶ trumpets
⁷ box-wood ⁸ surely ⁹ in spite of ¹⁰ nimble

I have to yow," quod he, "y-doon trespas,
In-as-muche as I maked yow aferd,

600

Whan I yow hente, and broghte out of the yerd;
But, sire, I dide it in no wikke ¹ entente;
Com doun, and I shal telle yow what I mente.
I shal seye sooth to yow, god help me so."
"Nay than," quod he, "I shrewe ² us bothe two,
And first I shrewe my-self, bothe blood and bones,
If thou bigyle me ofter than ones.

Thou shalt na-more, thurgh thy flaterye,
Do me to singe and winke with myn yë.

610

For he that winketh, whan he sholde see,
Al wilfully, god lat him never thee!" ³
"Nay," quod the fox, "but god yeve him meschaunce,
That is so undiscreet of governaunce,
That jangleth ⁴ whan he sholde holde his pees."

Lo, swich it is for to be recchelees,⁵
And necligent, and truste on flaterye.
But ye that holden this tale a folye,
As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
Taketh the moralitee, good men.

620

For seint Paul seith, that al that writen is,
To our doctryne ⁶ it is y-write, y-wis.
Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille.

Now, gode god, if that it be thy wille,
As seith my lord, so make us alle good men;
And bringe us to his heighe blisse. Amen.

Here is ended the Nonne Preestes Tale.

¹ wicked ² curse ³ prosper ⁴ talks ⁵ careless ⁶ for our
teaching

THE PROLOGUE OF THE PARDONER'S TALE

Here folweth the Prologe of the Pardoners Tale

Radix malorum est Cupiditas: Ad Thimotheum, sexto.

"Lordings," quod he, "in chirches whan I preche,
I peyne me to han an hauteyn speche,¹
And ringe it out as round as gooth a belle,
For I can al by rote² that I telle.
My theme is alwey oon, and ever was—
'*Radix malorum est Cupiditas.*'³

First I pronounce whennes that I come,
And than my bulles shewe I, alle and somme.
Our lige lordes seel on my patente,⁴
That shewe I first, my body to warente, 10
That no man be so bold, ne preest ne clerk,
Me to destourbe of Cristes holy werk;
And after that than telle I forth my tales,
Bulles of popes and of cardinales,
Of patriarkes, and bishoppes I shewe;
And in Latyn I speke a wordes fewe,
To saffron with my predicacioun,⁵
And for to stire men to devocioun.
Than shewe I forth my longe cristal stones,
Y-crammed ful of cloutes and of bones; 20
Reliks been they, as wenen they echoon.⁶
Than have I in latoun⁷ a sholder-boon
Which that was of an holy Jewes shepe.
'Good men,' seye I, 'take of my wordes kepe;⁸
If that this boon be wasshe in any welle,

¹ I am careful to speak in a dignified manner ² know all by heart ³ "For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6.10) ⁴ letter of authority ⁵ to flavor my preaching ⁶ each one ⁷ latten, a metal resembling brass ⁸ heed

If cow, or calf, or sheep, or oxen swelle
 That any worm¹ hath ete, or worm y-stonge,
 Tak water of that welle, and wash his tonge,
 And it is hool anon; and forthermore,
 Of pokkes and of scabbe, and every sore 30
 Shal every sheep be hool, that of this welle
 Drinketh a draughte; tak kepe eek what I telle.
 If that the good-man, that the bestes oweth,²
 Wol every wike,³ er that the cok him croweth,
 Fastinge, drinken of this welle a draughte,
 As thilke holy Jewe our eldres taughte,
 His bestes and his stoor shal multiplie.
 And, sirs, also it heleth jalousye;
 For, though a man be falle in jalous rage,
 Let maken with this water his potage, 40
 And never shal he more his wyf mistriste,
 Though he the sooth of hir defaute wiste;
 Al had she taken preestes two or three.

Heer is a miteyn eek, that ye may see.
 He that his hond wol putte in this miteyn,
 He shal have multiplying of his greyn,
 Whan he hath sowen, be it whete or otes,
 So that he offre pens, or elles grotes.

Good men and wommen, o thing warne I yow,
 If any wight be in this chirche now, 50
 That hath doon sinne horrible, that he
 Dar nat, for shame, of it y-shriven be,
 Or any womman, be she yong or old,
 That hath y-maad hir housbond cokewold,⁴
 Swich folk shul have no power ne no grace
 To offren to my reliks in this place.
 And who-so findeth him out of swich blame,
 He wol com up and offre in goddes name,

¹ snake ² owns ³ week ⁴ who has disgraced her husband

And I assoille¹ him by the auctoritee
 Which that by bulle y-graunted was to me.' 60
 By this gaude² have I wonne, yeer by yeer,
 An hundred mark sith I was Pardoner.
 I stonde lyk a clerk in my pulpet,
 And whan the lewed³ peple is doun y-set,
 I preche, so as ye han herd bifore,
 And telle an hundred false japes more.
 Than payne I me to strecche forth the nekke,
 And est and west upon the peple I bekke,⁴
 As doth a dowve sitting on a berne.
 Myn hondes and my tonge goon so yerne,⁵ 70
 That it is joye to see my bisnesse.
 Of avaryce and of swich cursednesse
 Is al my preching, for to make hem free
 To yeve her pens, and namely⁶ un-to me.
 For my entente is nat but for to winne,
 And no-thing for correccioun of sinne.
 I rekke never, whan that they ben beried,
 Though that her soules goon a-blake-beried!⁷
 For certes, many a predicacioun
 Comth ofte tyme of yvel entencioun; 80
 Som for plesaunce of folk and flaterye,
 To been avaunced by ipocrisye,
 And som for veyne glorie, and som for hate.
 For, whan I dar non other weyes debate,⁸
 Than wol I stinge him with my tonge smerte
 In preching, so that he shal nat asterte⁹
 To been defamed falsly, if that he
 Hath trespassed to my brethren or to me.
 For, though I telle noght his propre name,
 Men shal wel knowe that it is the same 90

¹ absolve ² trick ³ ignorant ⁴ nod ⁵ quickly ⁶ partic-
 ularly ⁷ go blackberrying ⁸ quarrel ⁹ escape

By signes and by othere circumstances.
 Thus quyte I folk that doon us displeances;
 Thus spitte I out my venim under hewe
 Of holynesse, to seme holy and trewe.

But shortly myn entente I wol devyse;
 I preche of no-thing but for coveityse.
 Therfor my theme is yet, and ever was—
'Radix malorum est cupiditas.'

Thus can I preche agayn that same vyce
 Which that I use, and that is avaryce. 100

But, though my-self be gilty in that sinne
 Yet can I maken other folk to twinne ¹
 From avaryce, and sore to repente.
 But that is nat my principal entente.
 I preche no-thing but for coveityse;
 Of this matere it oughte y-nogh suffyse.

Than telle I hem ensamples many oon
 Of olde stories, longe tyme agoon:
 For lewed peple loven tales olde;
 Swich thinges can they wel reporte and holde. 110

What? trowe ye, the whyles I may preche,
 And winne gold and silver for I teche,
 That I wol live in povert wilfully?
 Nay, nay, I thoghte it never trewely!
 For I wol preche and begge in sondry londes;
 I wol not do no labour with myn hondes,
 Ne make baskettes, and live therby,
 Because I wol nat beggen ydelly.

I wol non of the apostles counterfete;²
 I wol have money, wolle, chese, and whete, 120
 Al were it yeven of the povrest page,
 Or of the povrest widwe in a village,
 Al sholde hir children sterve for famyne.
 Nay! I wol drinke licour of the vyne,

¹ separate ² imitate

And have a joly wenche in every toun.
 But herkneth, lordings, in conclusioun;
 Your lyking is that I shal telle a tale.
 Now, have I dronke a draughte of corny ale,
 By god, I hope I shal yow telle a thing
 That shal, by resoun, been at your lyking. 130
 For, though myself be a ful vicious man,
 A moral tale yet I yow telle can,
 Which I am wont to preche, for to winne.
 How holde your pees, my tale I wol beginne."

THE PARDONER'S TALE

Here biginneth the Pardoners Tale

In Flaundres whylom was a companye
 Of yonge folk, that haunteden ¹ folye,
 As ryot, hasard, stewes,² and tavernes,
 Wher-as, with harpes, lutes, and giternes,
 They daunce and pleye at dees bothe day and night,
 And ete also and drinken over hir might,
 Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrifice
 With-in that develes temple, in cursed wyse,
 By superfluitee abhominable;
 Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable, 10
 That it is grisly for to here hem swere;
 Our blissed lordes body they to-tere;³
 Hem thoughte Jewes rente him noght y-nough;
 And ech of hem at otheres sinne lough.
 And right anon than comen tombesteres ⁴
 Fetys ⁵ and smale, and yonge fruytsteres,⁶
 Singers with harpes, baudes, wafereres,⁷

¹ indulged in ² brothels ³ They tear Christ's body to pieces,
 i.e. they swear by the various parts of it. ⁴ girl acrobats ⁵ well
 formed ⁶ girl fruit-sellers ⁷ cake vendors

Whiche been the verray develes officeres
 To kindle and blowe the fyr of lecherye,
 That is annexed un-to glotonye; 20
 The holy writ take I to my witnesse,
 That luxurie is in wyn and dronkenesse.

Lo, how that dronken Loth, unkindely,¹
 Lay by his doghtres two, unwittingly;
 So dronke he was, he niste what he wroghte.

Herodes (who-so wel the stories soghte),
 Whan he of wyn was replet at his feste,
 Right at his owene table he yaf his heste ²
 To sleen the Baptist John ful giltelees.

Senek seith eek a good word doutelees; 30
 He seith, he can no difference finde

Bitwix a man that is out of his minde
 And a man which that is dronkelewe,³
 But that woodnesse, y-fallen in a shrewe,⁴
 Persevereth lenger than doth dronkenesse.

O glotonye, ful of cursednesse,
 O cause first of our confusioun,
 O original of our dampnacioun,
 Til Crist had boght us with his blood agayn!

Lo, how dere, shortly for to sayn, 40
 Aboght was thilke cursed vileinye;
 Corrupt was all this world for glotonye!

Adam our fader, and his wyf also,
 Fro Paradys to labour and to wo
 Were driven for that vyce, it is no drede; ⁵
 For whyl that Adam fasted, as I rede,
 He was in Paradys; and whan that he
 Eet of the fruyt defended ⁶ on the tree,
 Anon he was out-cast to wo and peyne.

O glotonye, on thee wel oghte us pleyne! ⁷ 50

¹ unnaturally ² command ³ drunken ⁴ madness, when it
 comes upon a wicked man ⁵ without doubt ⁶ forbidden ⁷ in-
 deed of thee we should complain

O, wiste a man how many maladyes
 Folwen of excesse and of glotonyes,
 He wolde been the more mesurable ¹
 Of his diete, sittinge at his table.
 Allas! the shorte throte, the tendre mouth,
 Maketh that, Est and West, and North and South,
 In erthe, in eir, in water men to-swinke ²
 To gete a glotoun deyntee mete and drinke!
 Of this matere, o Paul, wel canstow trete,
 "Mete un-to wombe,³ and wombe eek un-to mete, 60
 Shal god destroyen bothe," as Paulus seith.
 Allas! a foul thing it is, by my feith,
 To seye this word, and fouler is the dede,
 Whan man so drinketh of the whyte and rede,
 That of his throte he maketh his privee,
 Thurgh thilke cursed superfluitee.

The apostel weping seith ful pitously,
 "Ther walken many of whiche yow told have I,
 I seye it now weping with pitous voys,
 That they been enemys of Cristes croys, 70
 Of whiche the ende is deeth, wombe is her god."
 O wombe! O bely! O stinking cod,⁴
 Fulfild of donge and of corrupcioun!
 At either ende of thee foul is the soun.
 How greet labour and cost is thee to finde! ⁵
 Thise cokes, how they stampe, and streyne,⁶ and grinde,
 And turnen substance in-to accident,⁷
 To fulfille al thy likerous talent! ⁸
 Out of the harde bones knocke they
 The mary,⁹ for they caste noght a-wey 80
 That may go thurgh the golet softe and swote; ¹⁰

¹ temperate ² labor hard ³ belly ⁴ bag ⁵ provide for
⁶ labor ⁷ "Substance" in scholastic philosophy means essential
 nature contrasted with the "accidents" of shape, smell, color, etc.
⁸ over-dainty taste ⁹ marrow ¹⁰ sweetly

Of spicerye, of leef, and bark, and rote
 Shal been his sauce y-maked by delyt,
 To make him yet a newer appetyt.
 But certes, he that haunteth swich delyces
 Is deed, whyl that he liveth in tho vyces.

A lecherous thing is wyn, and dronkenesse
 Is ful of stryving and of wrecchednesse.
 O dronke man, disfigured is thy face,
 Sour is thy breeth, foul artow to embrace, 90
 And thurgh thy dronke nose semeth the soun
 As though thou seydest ay "Sampsoun, Sampsoun";
 And yet, god wot, Sampsoun drank never no wyn.
 Thou fallest, as it were a stiked swyn;
 Thy tonge is lost, and al thyn honest cure;¹
 For dronkenesse is verray sepulture
 Of mannes wit and his discrecioun.
 In whom that drinke hath dominacioun,
 He can no conseil kepe, it is no drede.²
 Now kepe yow fro the whyte and fro the rede, 100
 And namely fro the whyte wyn of Lepe,³
 That is to selle in Fish-strete or in Chepe.⁴
 This wyn of Spayne crepeth subtilly
 In othere wyne, growing faste by,
 Of which ther ryseth swich fumositee,⁵
 That whan a man hath dronken draughtes three,
 And weneth that he be at hoom in Chepe,
 He is in Spayne, right at the toun of Lepe,
 Nat at the Rochel, ne at Burdeux toun;
 And thanne wol he seye, "Sampsoun, Sampsoun." 110

But herkneth, lordings, o word, I yow preye,
 That alle the sovereyn actes, dar I seye,
 Of victories in th'olde testament,
 Thurgh verray god, that is omnipotent,

¹ care for a good name ² doubt ³ a town in Spain ⁴ Cheap-
 side in London ⁵ fumes

Were doon in abstinence and in preyere;
 Loketh the Bible, and ther ye may it lere.

Loke, Attila, the grete conquerour,
 Deyde in his sleep, with shame and dishonour,
 Bleding ay at his nose in dronkenesse;
 A capitayn sholde live in sobrenesse.

120

And over ¹ al this, avyseth yow right wel
 What was comaunded un-to Lamuel—
 Nat Samuel, but Lamuel, seye I—
 Redeth the Bible, and finde it expresly
 Of wyn-yeving to hem that han justyse.
 Na-more of this, for it may wel suffyse.

And now that I have spoke of glotonye,
 Now wol I yow defenden hasardrye.²
 Hasard is verray moder of lesinges,³
 And of deceite, and cursed forsweringes,
 Blaspheme of Crist, manslaughter, and wast also
 Of catel ⁴ and of tyme; and forthermo,
 It is repreve ⁵ and contrarie of honour
 For to ben holde a commune hasardour.
 And ever the hyër he is of estaat,
 The more is he holden desolaat.
 If that a prince useth hasardrye,
 In alle governaunce and policye
 He is, as by commune opinioun,
 Y-holde the lasse in reputacioun.

130

140

Stilbon, that was a wys embassadour,
 Was sent to Corinthe, in ful greet honour,
 Fro Lacidomie, to make hir alliaunce.
 And whan he cam, him happede, par chaunce,
 That alle the grettest that were of that lond,
 Pleyinge atte hasard he hem fond.
 For which, as sone as it mighte be,
 He stal him hoom agayn to his contree,

¹ in addition to ² forbid gambling ³ lies ⁴ property ⁵ re-
 proach

And seyde, "ther wol I nat lese my name;
N' I wol nat take on me so greet defame, 150
Yow for to allye un-to none hasardours.
Sendeth othere wyse embassadours;
For, by my trouthe, me were lever dye,¹
Than I yow sholde to hasardours allye.
For ye that been so glorious in honours
Shul nat allyen yow with hasardours
As by my wil, ne as by my tretee."
This wyse philosophre thus seyde he.

Loke eek that, to the king Demetrius
The king of Parthes, as the book seith us, 160
Sente him a paire of dees² of gold in scorn,
For he hadde used hasard ther-biforn;
For which he heeld his glorie or his renoun
At no value or reputacioun.
Lordes may finden other maner pley
Honeste y-nough to dryve the day away.

Now wol I speke of othes false and grete
A word or two, as olde bokes trete.
Gret swering is a thing abhominable,
And false swering is yet more reprevable. 170
The heighe god forbad swering at al,
Witnesse on Mathew; but in special
Of swering seith the holy Jeremye,
"Thou shalt seye sooth thyn othes, and nat lye,
And swere in dome, and eek in rightwisnesse;"
But ydel swering is a cursednesse.
Bihold and see, that in the firste table
Of heighe goddes hestes honourable,
How that the seconde heste of him is this—
"Tak nat my name in ydel or amis." 180
Lo, rather he forbedeth swich swering
Than homicyde or many a cursed thing;

¹ I should rather die ² dice

I seye that, as by ordre, thus it stondeth;
 This knowen, that his hestes understondeth,
 How that the second heste of god is that.
 And forther over, I wol thee telle al plat,¹
 That vengeance shal nat parten from his hous,
 That of his othes is to outrageous.
 "By goddes precious herte, and by his nayles,
 And by the blode of Crist, that it is in Hayles,² 190
 Seven is my chaunce, and thyn is cink and treye;³
 By goddes armes, if thou falsly pleye,
 This dagger shal thurgh-out thyn herte go"—
 This fruyt cometh of the bicched bones ⁴ two,
 Forswering, ire, falsnesse, homicyde.
 Now, for the love of Crist that for us dyde,
 Leveth your othes, bothe grete and smale;
 But, sirs, now wol I telle forth my tale.

Thise ryotoures three, of which I telle,
 Longe erst er pryme ⁵ rong of any belle, 200
 Were set hem in a taverne for to drinke;
 And as they satte, they herde a belle clinke
 Biforn a cors, was caried to his grave;
 That oon of hem gan callen to his knave,⁶
 "Go bet," ⁷ quod he, "and axe redily,
 What cors is this that passeth heer forby;
 And look that thou reporte his name wel."

"Sir," quod this boy, "it nedeth never-a-del.
 It was me told, er ye cam heer, two houres;
 He was, pardee, an old felawe of youre; 210
 And sodeynly he was y-slayn to-night,⁸
 For-dronke,⁹ as he sat on his bench upright;
 Ther cam a privee theef, men clepeth Deeth,

¹ and furthermore I tell you plainly ² an abbey in Gloucester-shire ³ five and three ⁴ cursed bones (dice) ⁵ nine in the morning ⁶ servant ⁷ quickly ⁸ last night ⁹ dead drunk

That in this contree al the peple sleeth,
And with his spere he smoot his herte a-two,
And wente his wey with-outen wordes mo.
He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence:
And, maister, er ye come in his presence,
Me thinketh that it were necessarie
For to be war of swich an adversarie: 220
Beth redy for to mete him evermore.
Thus taughte me my dame, I sey na-more."
"By seinte Marie," seyde this taverner,
"The child seith sooth, for he hath slayn this yeer,
Henne¹ over a myle, with-in a greet village,
Both man and womman, child and hyne,² and page.
I trowe his habitacioun be there;
To been avysed greet wisdom it were,
Er that he dide a man a dishonour."
"Ye, goddes armes," quod this ryotour, 230
"Is it swich peril with him for to mete?
I shal him seke by wey and eek by strete,
I make avow to goddes digne bones!
Herkneth, felawes, we three been al ones;
Lat ech of us holde up his hond til other,
And ech of us bicomen otheres brother,
And we wol sleen this false traytour Deeth;
He shal be slayn, which that so many sleeth,
By goddes dignitee, er it be night."

Togidres han thise three her trouthes plight, 240
To live and dyen ech of hem for other,
As though he were his owene y-boren brother.
And up they sterte al drunken, in this rage,
And forth they goon towardses that village,
Of which the taverner had spoke biforn,
And many a grisly ooth than han they sworn,

¹ hence ² servant

And Cristes blessed body they to-rente—

"Deeth shal be deed, if that they may him hente."

Whan they han goon nat fully half a myle,

Right as they wolde han troden over a style, 250

An old man and a povre with hem mette.

This olde man ful mekely hem grette,¹

And seyde thus, "now, lordes, god yow see!"²

The proudest of thise ryotoures three

Answerde agayn, "what? carl,³ with sory grace,

Why artow al forwrapped⁴ save thy face?

Why livestow so longe in so greet age?"

This olde man gan loke in his visage,

And seyde thus, "for I ne can nat finde

A man, though that I walked-in-to Inde, 260

Neither in citee nor in no village,

That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age;

And therfore moot I han myn age stille,

As longe time as it is goddes wille.

Ne deeth, alas! ne wol nat han my lyf;

Thus walke I, lyk a resteleees caityf,⁵

And on the ground, which is my modres gate,

I knokke with my staf, bothe erly and late,

And seye, 'leve moder, leet me in!

Lo, how I vanish, flesh, and blood, and skin! 270

Allas! whan shul my bones been at reste?

Moder, with yow wolde I chaunge my cheste,

That in my chambre longe tyme hath be,

Ye! for an heyre clout to wrappe me!"⁶

But yet to me she wol nat do that grace,

For which full pale and welked⁷ is my face.

But, sirs, to yow it is no curteisye

To speken to an old man vileinye,

¹ greeted ² God protect you ³ fellow ⁴ wrapped up ⁵ wretch
⁶ I would exchange my money chest for a hair-cloth shroud to wrap about me ⁷ withered

But he trespasse in worde, or elles in dede.
 In holy writ ye may your-self wel rede, 280
 "Agayns¹ an old man, hoor upon his heed,
 Ye sholde aryse; wherefore I yeve yow reed,²
 Ne dooth un-to an old man noon harm now,
 Na-more than ye wolde men dide to yow
 In age, if that ye so longe abyde;
 And god be with yow, wher ye go³ or ryde.
 I moot go thider as I have to go."

"Nay, olde cherl, by god, thou shalt nat so,"
 Seyde this other hasardour anon;
 "Thou partest nat so lightly, by seint John! 290
 Thou spak right now of thilke traitour Deeth,
 That in this contree alle our frendes sleeth.
 Have heer my trouthe, as thou are his aspye,⁴
 Tel wher he is, or thou shalt it abyde,⁵
 By god, and by the holy sacrament!
 For soothly thou art oon of his assent,
 To sleen us yonge folk, thou false thief!"

"Now, sirs," quod he, "if that yow be so leef⁶
 To finde Deeth, turne up this croked wey,
 For in that grove I lafte him, by my fey, 300
 Under a tree, and ther he wol abyde;
 Nat for your boost he wol him no-thing hyde.
 See ye that ook? right ther ye shul him finde.
 God save yow, that boghte agayn mankinde,
 And yow amende!"—thus seyde this olde man.
 And everich of thise ryotoures ran,
 Til he cam to that tree, and ther they founde
 Of florins fyne of golde y-coyned rounde
 Wel ny an eighte busshels, as hem thoughte.
 No lenger thanne after Deeth they soughte, 310
 But ech of hem so glad was of that sighte,
 For that the florins been so faire and brighte,

¹ in the presence of ² advice ³ walk ⁴ spy ⁵ be sorry
 anxious

That doun they sette hem by this precious hord.
The worste of hem he spake the firste word.

“Brethren,” quod he, “tak kepe what I seye;
My wit is greet, though that I bourde ¹ and pleye.
This tresor hath fortune un-to us yiven,

In mirthe and jolitee our lyf to liven,
And lightly as it comth, so wol we spende.

Ey! goddes precious dignitee! who wende ² 320
To-day, that we sholde han so fair a grace?

But mighte this gold be caried fro this place
Hoom to myn hous, or elles un-to youres—

For wel ye woot that al this gold is oures—
Than were we in heigh felicitee.

But trewely, by daye it may nat be;
Men wolde seyn that we were theves stronge.

And for our owene tresor doon us honge.³

This tresor moste y-caried be by nighte
As wysly and as slyly as it mighte. 330

Wherfore I rede that cut among us alle

Be drawe, and lat see wher the cut wol falle;

And he that hath the cut with herte blythe

Shal renne to the toun, and that ful swythe,⁴

And bringe us breed and wyn ful prively.

And two of us shul kepen subtilly

This tresor wel; and, if he wol nat tarie,

Whan it is night, we wol this tresor carie

By oon assent, wher-as us thinketh best.”

That oon of hem the cut broughte in his fest, 340

And bad hem drawe, and loke wher it wol falle;

And it fil on the yongeste of hem alle;

And forth toward the toun he wente anon.

And al-so sone as that he was gon,

That oon of hem spak thus un-to that other,

“Thou knowest wel thou art my sworne brother,

¹ joke ² thought ³ have us hanged ⁴ quickly

Thy profit wol I telle thee anon.

Thou woost wel that our felawe is agon;
And heer is gold, and that ful greet plentee,
That shal departed been among us three.

350

But natheles, if I can shape it so
That it departed were among us two,
Hadde I nat doon a freendes torn to thee?"

That other answerde, "I noot how that may be;
He woot how that the gold is with us tweye,
What shal we doon, what shal we to him seye?"

"Shal it be conseil?" ¹ seyde the firste shrewe,²
"And I shal tellen thee, in wordes fewe,
What we shal doon, and bringe it wel aboute."

"I graunte," quod that other, "out of doute, 360
That, by my trouthe, I wol thee nat biwreye." ³

"Now," quod the firste, "thou woodst wel we be
tweye,

And two of us shul strenger be than oon.
Look whan that he is set, and right anon
Arys, as though thou woldest with him pleye;
And I shal ryve him thurgh the sydes tweye
Whyl that thou strogelest with him as in game,
And with thy dagger look thou do the same;
And than shal al this gold departed be,
My dere freend, bitwixen me and thee; 370
Than may we bothe our lustes al fulfille,
And pleye at dees right at our owene wille."
And thus acorded been thise shrewes tweye
To sleen the thridde, as ye han herd me seye.

This yongest, which that wente un-to the toun,
Ful ofte in herte he rolleth up and doun
The beautee of thise florins newe and brighte.
"O lord!" quod he, "if so were that I mighte
Have al this tresor to my-self allone,

¹ secret ² rascal ³ betray

Ther is no man that liveth under the trone 380
 Of god, that sholde live so mery as I!"
 And atte laste the feend, our enemy,
 Putte in his thought that he shold poyson beye,¹
 With which he mighte sleen his felawes tweye;
 For-why the feend fond him in swich lyvinge,
 That he had leve him to sorwe bringe,
 For this was outrelly ² his fulle entente
 To sleen hem bothe, and never to repente.
 And forth he gooth, no lenger wolde he tarie,
 Into the toun, un-to a pothecarie, 390
 And preyed him, that he him wolde selle
 Som poyson, that he mighte his rattes quelle,³
 And eek ther was a polcat in his hawe,⁴
 That, as he seyde, his capouns hadde y-slawe,
 And fayn he wolde wreke him, if he mighte,
 On vermin, that destroyed him by nighte.

The pothecarie answerde, "and thou shalt have
 A thing that, al-so god my soule save,
 In al this world there nis no creature,
 That ete or dronke hath of this confiture ⁵ 400
 Noght but the mountance ⁶ of a corn ⁷ of whete,
 That he ne shal his lyf anon forlete;
 Ye, sterve ⁸ he shal, and that in lasse whyle
 Than thou wolt goon a paas ⁹ nat but a myle;
 This poyson is so strong and violent."

This cursed man hath in his hond y-hent
 This poyson in a box, and sith he ran
 In-to the nexte strete, un-to a man,
 And borwed of him large botels three;
 And in the two his poyson poured he; 410
 The thridde he kepte clene for his drinke.
 For al the night he shoop him for to swinke.¹⁰

¹ buy ² entirely ³ kill ⁴ yard ⁵ mixture ⁶ amount
⁷ grain ⁸ die ⁹ at a foot-pace ¹⁰ planned to work hard

In caryinge of the gold out of that place.
 And whan this ryotour, with sory grace,
 Had filled with wyn his grete botels three,
 To his felawes agayn repaireth he.

What nedeth it to sermone of it more?
 For right as they had cast his deeth bifore,
 Right so they han him slayn, and that anon.
 And whan that this was doon, thus spak that oon, 420
 "Now lat us sitte and drinke, and make us merie,
 And afterward we wol his body berie."
 And with that word it happed him, par cas,
 To take the botel ther the poyson was,
 And drank, and yaf his felawe drinke also,
 For which anon they storven¹ bothe two.

But, certes, I suppose that Avicen
 Wroot never in no canon, ne in no fen,²
 Mo wonder³ signes of empoisoning
 Than hadde thise wrecches two, er hir ending. 430
 Thus ended been thise homicydes two,
 And eek the false empoysoner also.

O cursed sinne, ful of cursednesse!
 O traytours homicyde, o wikkednesse!
 O glotonye, luxurie, and hasardrye!
 Thou blasphemour of Crist with vileinye
 And othes grete, of usage and of pryde!
 Allas! mankinde, how may it bityde,
 That to thy creatour which that thee wroghte,
 And with his precious herte-blood thee boghte, 440
 Thou art so fals and so unkinde, allas!

Now, goode men, god foryeve yow your trespas,
 And ware yow fro⁴ the sinne of avaryce.
 Myn holy pardoun may yow alle waryce,⁵

¹ died ² never wrote in any book or chapter ³ more wonderful

⁴ beware of ⁵ cure

So that ye offre nobles or sterlinges,¹
 Or elles silver broches, spones, ringes.
 Boweth your heed under this holy bulle!
 Cometh up, ye wyves, offreth of your wolle!
 Your name I entre heer in my rolle anon;
 In-to the blisse of hevene shul ye gon;
 I yow assoille,² by myn heigh power,
 Yow that wol offre, as clene and eek as cleer
 As ye were born; and, lo, sirs, thus I preche.
 And Jesu Crist, that is our soules leche,
 So graunte yow his pardon to receyve;
 For that is best; I wol yow nat deceyve.

450

But sirs,³ o word forgat I in my tale,
 I have relikes and pardon in my male,⁴
 As faire as any man in Engelond,
 Whiche were me yeven by the popes hond.
 If any of yow wol, of devocioun,
 Offren, and han myn absolucioun,
 Cometh forth anon, and kneleth heer adoun,
 And mekely receyveth my pardoun:
 Or elles, taketh pardon as ye wende,
 Al newe and fresh, at every tounes ende,
 So that ye offren alwey newe and newe
 Nobles and pens, which that be gode and trewe.
 It is an honour to everich that is heer,
 That ye mowe have a suffisant pardoneer
 T'assoille yow, in contree as ye ryde,
 For adventures which that may bityde.
 Peraventure ther may falle oon or two
 Doun of his hors, and breke his nekke atwo.
 Look which a seuretee is it to yow alle
 That I am in your felaweship y-falle,
 That may assoille yow, bothe more and lasse,
 Whan that the soule shal fro the body passe.

460

470

¹ silver coins ² absolve ³ i.e. his fellow-pilgrims ⁴ bag

I rede that our hoste heer shal biginne,
For he is most envoluped in sinne. 480

Com forth, sir hoste, and offre first anon,
And thou shalt kisse the reliks everichon,
Ye, for a grote! unbokel anon thy purs."

"Nay, nay," quod he, "than have I Cristes curs!
Lat be," quod he, "it shall nat be, so thee'ch! ¹
Thou woldest make me kisse thyn old breech, ²
And swere it were a relik of a seint."

.....

This pardoner answerde nat a word;
So wrooth he was, no word ne wolde he seye.

"Now," quod our host, "I wol no lenger pleye 490
With thee, ne with noon other angry man."

But right anon the worthy Knight bigan,
Whan that he saugh that all the peple lough,
"Na-more of this, for it is right y-nough;
Sir Pardoner, be glad and mery of chere;
And ye, sir host, that been to me so dere,
I prey yow that ye kisse the Pardoner.

And Pardoner, I prey thee, drawe thee neer,
And, as we diden, lat us laughe and pleye."

Anon they kiste, and riden forth hir weye. 500

Here is ended the Pardoners Tale

TRUTH

Balade de bon conseil

FLEE fro the prees, ³ and dwells with sothfastnesse, ⁴
Suffyce unto thy good, ⁵ though hit be smal;
For hord hath hate, and climbing tikelnesse, ⁶

¹ so may I prosper ² breeches ³ crowd ⁴ truth ⁵ be con-
tent with your property ⁶ uncertainty

Prees hath envye, and wele blent overal; ¹
 Savour ² no more than thee bihove shal;
 Werk wel thy-self, that other folk canst rede; ³
 And trouthe shal deliver, hit is no drede.

Tempest ⁴ thee noght al croked to redresse, ⁵
 In trust of hir that turneth as a bal: ⁶
 Gret reste ⁷ stant ⁸ in litel besinesse;
 And eek be war to sporne ageyn an al; ⁹
 Stryve noght, as doth the crokke with the wal.
 Daunte ¹⁰ thy-self, that dauntest otheres dede;
 And trouthe shal deliver, hit is no drede.

That thee is sent, receyve in buxumnesse, ¹¹
 The wrastling for this worlde axeth a fal.
 Her nis non hoom, her nis but wildernesse:
 Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth, beste, out of thy stal!
 Know thy contree, look up, thank God of al;
 Hold the hye wey, and lat thy gost ¹² thee lede: 20
 And trouthe shal deliver, hit is no drede.

Envoy

Therefore, thou Vache, ¹³ leve thyn old wrecchednesse
 Unto the worlde; leve now to be thral;
 Crye him mercy, that of his hy goodnesse
 Made thee of noght, and in especial
 Draw unto him, and pray in general
 For thee, and eek for other, hevenlich mede; ¹⁴
 And trouthe shal deliver, hit is no drede.

Explicit Le bon counseill de G. Chaucer

¹ wealth always blinds ² desire ³ advice ⁴ trouble ⁵ set
 straight ⁶ i.e. Fortune ⁷ leisure ⁸ is found in ⁹ And also
 be wary of kicking against an awl ¹⁰ subdue ¹¹ humility ¹² spirit
¹³ Sir Philip la Vache, a friend of Chaucer's ¹⁴ reward

THE COMPLEINT OF CHAUCER TO HIS EMPTY PURSE

To you, my purse, and to non other wight¹
 Compleyne I, for ye be my lady dere!
 I am so sory, now that ye be light;
 For certes, but ye make me hevy chere,
 Me were as leef be leyd up-on my bere;²
 For whiche un-to your mercy thus I crye:
 Beth³ hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye!

Now voucheth sauf this day, or⁴ hit be night,
 That I of you the blisful soun may here,
 Or see your colour lyk the sonne bright, 10
 That of yelownesse hadde never pere.
 Ye be my lyf, ye be myn hertes stere,⁵
 Quene of comfort and of good companye:
 Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye!

Now purs, that be to me my lyves light,
 And saveour, as doun in this worlde here,
 Out of this tounne help me through your might,
 Sin that ye wole nat been my tresorere;
 For I am shave as nye⁶ as any frere.⁷
 But yit I pray un-to your curtesye: 20
 Beth hevy ageyn, or elles mot I dye!

Lenvoy de Chaucer

O conquerour⁸ of Brutes⁹ Albioun!
 Which that by lyne and free eleccioun
 Ben verray king, this song to you I sende;

¹ creature ² bier ³ be ⁴ before ⁵ guide ⁶ close ⁷ friar
⁸ Henry IV ⁹ Brutus, mythical founder of Albion (Britain)

And ye, that mowen ¹ al our harm amende,
Have minde up-on my supplicacioun!

BALLADS

GET UP AND BAR THE DOOR

IT FELL about the Martinmas time,
And a gay time it was then,
When our good wife got puddings to make,
And she's boild them in the pan.

The wind sae cauld blew south and north,
And blew into the door;
Quoth our goodman to our good wife,
"Gae out and bar the door."

"My hand is in my hussyfskap,
Goodman, as ye may see;
An it shoud nae be barrd this hundred year,
It's no be barrd for me."

10

They made a paction tween them twa,
They made it firm and sure,
That the first word whacer shoud speak,
Shoud rise and bar the door.

Then by there came two gentlemen,
At twelve o'clock at night,
And they could neither see house nor hall,
Nor coal nor candle-light.

20

"Now whether is this a rich man's house,
Or whether is it a poor?"

¹ are able

But neer a word wad ane o them speak,
For barring of the door.

And first they ate the white puddings,
And then they ate the black;
Tho muckle thought the goodwife to hersel,
Yet neer a word she spake.

Then said the one unto the other,
"Here, man, tak ye my knife;
Do ye tak aff the auld man's beard,
And I'll kiss the goodwife." 30

"But there's nae water in the house,
And what shall we do than?"
"What ails thee at the pudding-broo,
That boils into the pan?"

O up then started our goodman,
And angry man was he:
"Will ye kiss my wife before my een,
And sead ¹ me wi pudding-bree?" 40

Then up and started our goodwife,
Gied three skips on the floor:
"Goodman, you've spoken the foremost word,
Get up and bar the door."

HUGH OF LINCOLN

Four and twenty boys
Were playing at the ba,
And by it came him sweet Sir Hugh,
And he playd o'er them a'.

¹ Scald

He kicked the ba with his right foot,
And catchd it with his knee,
And throuch-and-thro the Jew's window
He gard the bonny ba flee.

He's doen him to the Jew's castell,
And walkd it round about; 10
And there he saw the Jew's daughter,
At the window looking out.

"Throw down the ba, ye Jew's daughter,
Throw down the ba to me!"
"Never a bit," says the Jew's daughter,
"Till up to me come ye."

"How will I come up? How can I come up?
How can I come to thee?
For as ye did to my auld father,
The same ye'll do me." 20

She's gane till her father's garden,
And pu'd an apple red and green;
'Twas a' to wyle him sweet Sir Hugh,
And to entice him in.

She's led him in through ae dark door,
And sae has she thro nine;
She's laid him on a dressing-table,
And stickit him like a swine.

And first came out the thick, thick blood,
And syne came out the thin, 30
And syne came out the bonny heart's blood:
There was nae mair within.

She's rowd him in a cake o lead,
Bade him lie still and sleep;
She's thrown him in Our Lady's draw-well,
Was fifty fathoms deep.

When bells were rung, and mass was sung,
And a' the bairns came home,
When every lady gat hame her son,
The Lady Maisry gat nane.

40

She's taen her mantle her about,
Her coffer ¹ by the hand,
And she's gane out to seek her son,
And wanderd o'er the land.

She's doen her to the Jew's castell,
Where a' were fast asleep,
"Gin ² ye be there, my sweet Sir Hugh,
I pray you to me speak."

She's doen her to the Jew's garden,
Thought he had been gathering fruit:
"Gin ye be there, my sweet Sir Hugh,
I pray you to me speak."

50

She neard Our Lady's deep draw-well,
Was fifty fathom deep:
"Whareer ye be, my sweet Sir Hugh,
I pray you to me speak."

"Gae hame, gae hame, my mither dear,
Prepare my winding sheet,
And at the back o merry Lincoln
The morn I will you meet."

60

¹ jewel-box² If

Your steid was auld, and ye hae got mair,
Sum other dule ¹ ye drie ² O.' 20

'O I hae killed my fadir deir,
Mither, mither,
O I hae killed my fadir deir,
Alas, and wae is mee O!

'And whatten penance wul ye drie for that,
Edward, Edward?

And whatten penance will ye drie for that?
My deir son, now tell me O.'

'Ile set my feit in yonder boat,
Mither, mither, 30

Ile set my feit in yonder boat,
And Ile fare ovir the sea O.'

'And what wul ye doe wi your towirs and your ha,³
Edward, Edward?

And what wul you doe wi your towirs and your ha,
That were sae fair to see O?'

'Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa,
Mither, mither,
Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa,
For here nevir mair maun ⁴ I bee O.' 40

'And what wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,
Edward, Edward?

And what wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,
Whan ye gang ovir the sea O?'

'The warldis room, late them beg thrae ⁵ life,
Mither, mither,

The warldis room, late them beg thrae life,
For thame nevir mair wul I see O.'

¹ sorrow ² suffer ³ hall ⁴ must ⁵ through

'And what wul ye leive to your ain ¹ mither deir,
Edward, Edward?

50

And what wul ye leive to your ain mither deir?

My deir son, now tell me O.'

'The curse of hell frae me sall ² ye beir,³

Mither, mither,

The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,

Sic counseils ye gave to me O.'

THE DÆMON LOVER

1. 'O WHERE have you been, my long, long love,
This long seven years and mair?'

'O I'm come to seek my former vows
Ye granted me before.'

2. 'O hold your tongue of your former vows,
For they will breed sad strife;
O hold your tongue of your former vows,
For I am become a wife.'

3. He turned him right and round about,
And the tear blinded his ee:
'I wad never hae trodden on Irish ground,
If it had not been for thee.

10

4. 'I might hae had a king's daughter,
Far, far beyond the sea;
I might have had a king's daughter,
Had it not been for love o thee.'

5. 'If ye might have had a king's daughter,
Yersel ye had to blame;

¹ own ² shall ³ bear

Ye might have had taken the king's daughter,
For ye kend¹ that I was nane. 20

6. 'If I was to leave my husband dear,
And my two babes also,
O what have you to take me to,
If with you I should go?'

7. 'I hae seven ships upon the sea—
The eighth brought me to land—
With four-and-twenty bold mariners,
And music on every hand.'

8. She has taken up her two little babes,
Kissd them baith² cheek and chin: 30
'O fair ye weel, my ain two babes,
For I'll never see you again.'

9. She set her foot upon the ship,
No mariners could she behold;
But the sails were o the taffetie,³
And the masts o the beaten gold.

10. She had not sailed a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
When dismal grew his countenance,
And drumlie⁴ grew his ee. 40

11. They had not saild a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
Until she espied his cloven foot,
And she wept right bitterlie.

¹ knew ² both ³ fine silk ⁴ gloomy

12. 'O hold your tongue of your weeping,' says he,
 'Of your weeping now let me be;
 I will shew you how the lilies grow
 On the banks of Italy.'
13. 'O what hills are yon, yon pleasant hills,
 That the sun shines sweetly on?' 50
 'O yon are the hills of heaven,' he said,
 'Where you will never win.'¹
14. 'O whaten a mountain is yon,' she said,
 'All so dreary wi frost and snow?'
 'O yon is the mountain of hell,' he cried,
 'Where you and I will go.'
15. He strack² the tap-mast wi his hand,
 The fore-mast wi his knee,
 And he brake that gallant ship in twain,
 And sank her in the sea. 60

THOMAS RYMER

1. TRUE Thomas lay oer yond grassy bank,
 And he beheld a ladie gay,
 A ladie that was brisk and bold,
 Come riding oer the fernie brae.
2. Her skirt was of the grass-green silk,
 Her mantel of the velvet fine,
 At ilka tett of her horse's mane
 Hung fifty silver bells and nine.
3. True Thomas he took off his hat
 And bowed him low down till his knee: 10

¹ go ² struck

'All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven!
For your peer on earth I never did see.'

4. 'O no, O no, True Thomas,' she says,
 'That name does not belong to me;
I am but the queen of fair Elfland,
 And I'm come here for to visit thee.

.....

5. 'But ye maun go wi me now, Thomas,
 True Thomas, ye maun go wi me,
For ye maun serve me seven years,
 Thro weel or wae as may chance to be.' 20

6. She turned about her milk-white steed,
 And took True Thomas up behind,
And aye whenever her bridle rang,
 The steed flew swifter than the wind.

7. For forty days and forty nights
 He wade thro red blude to the knee,
And he saw neither sun nor moon,
 But heard the roaring of the sea.

8. O they rade on and further on,
 Until they came to a garden green: 30
'Light down, light down, ye ladie free,
 Some of that fruit let me pull to thee.'

9. 'O no, O no, True Thomas,' she says,
 'That fruit maun not be touched by thee,
For a' the plagues that are in hell
 Light on the fruit of this countrie.

10. 'But I have a loaf here in my lap,
 Likewise a bottle of claret wine,

And here ere we go farther on,
We'll rest a while, and ye may dine.'

40

11. When he had eaten and drunk his fill,
 'Lay down your head upon my knee,'
The lady sayd, 'ere we climb yon hill,
 And I will show you fairlies three.

12. 'O see ye not yon narrow road,
 So thick beset wi thorns and briers?
That is the path of righteousness,
 Tho after it but few enquires.

13. 'And see not ye that braid braid road,
 That lies across yon lillie leven?
That is the path of wickedness,
 Tho some call it the road to heaven.

50

14. 'And see ye not that bonny road,
 Which winds about the fernie brae?
That is the road to fair Elfland,
 Where you and I this night maun gae.

15. 'But Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue,
 Whatever ye may hear or see,
For gin ae word you should chance to speak,
 You will neer get back to your ain countrie.'

60

16. He has gotten a coat of the even cloth,
 And a pair of shoes of velvet green,
And till seven years were past and gone
 True Thomas on earth was never seen.

KEMP OWYNE ¹

HER mother died when she was young,
Which gave her cause to make great moan;
Her father married the warst woman
That ever lived in Christendom.

She servèd her with foot and hand,
In every thing that she could dee,²
Till once, in an unlucky time,
She threw her in ower Craigy's sea.³

Says, "Lie you there, dove Isabel,
And all my sorrows lie with thee; 10
Till Kemp Owyne come ower the sea,
And borrow you with kisses three;
Let all the warld do what they will,
Oh borrowed shall you never be!"

Her breath grew strang, her hair grew lang,
And twisted thrice about the tree,
And all the people, far and near,
Thought that a savage beast was she.

These news did come to Kemp Owyne,
Where he lived, far beyond the sea; 20
He hasted him to Craigy's sea,
And on the savage beast lookd he.

Her breath was strang, her hair was lang,
And twisted was about the tree,

¹ Owain, one of King Arthur's knights ² do ³ probably a
variant for "over a crag of the sea"

And with a swing she came about:

“Come to Craigy’s sea, and kiss with me.

“Here is a royal belt,” she cried,

“That I have found in the green sea;

And while your body it is on,

Drawn shall your blood never be;

30

But if you touch me, tail or fin,

I vow my belt your death shall be.”

He stepped in, gave her a kiss,

The royal belt he brought him wi;¹

Her breath was strang, her hair was lang,

And twisted twice about the tree,

And with a swing she came about:

“Come to Craigy’s sea, and kiss with me.

“Here is a royal ring,” she said,

“That I have found in the green sea;

40

And while your finger it is on,

Drawn shall your blood never be;

But if you touch me, tail or fin,

I swear my ring your death shall be.”

He stepped in, gave her a kiss,

The royal ring he brought him wi;

Her breath was strang, her hair was lang,

And twisted ance about the tree,

And with a swing she came about:

“Come to Craigy’s sea, and kiss with me.

50

“Here is a royal brand,” she said,

“That I have found in the green sea;

And while your body it is on,

Drawn shall your blood never be;

¹ with

But if you touch me, tail or fin,
I swear my brand your death shall be."

He stepped in, gave her a kiss,
The royal brand he brought him wi;
Her breath was sweet, her hair grew short,
And twisted nane about the tree, 60
And smilingly she came about,
As fair a woman as fair could be.

SIR PATRICK SPENCE

THE king sits in Dumferling toune,
Drinking the blude-reid wine:
"O whar will I get guid sailor,
To sail this schip of mine?"

Up and spak an eldern knight,
Sat at the kings richt kne:
"Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor,
That sails upon the se."

The king has written a braid ¹ letter,
And signd it wi his hand, 10
And set it to Sir Patrick Spence,
Was walking on the sand.

The first line that Sir Patrick red,
A loud lauch ² lauchèd he;
The next line that Sir Patrick red,
The teir blinded his ee.

"O wha is this has done this deid,
This ill deid don to me,

¹ broad ² laugh

To send me out this time o' the yeir,
To sail upon the se! 20

"Mak hast, mak haste, my mirry men all,
Our guid schip sails the morne:"
"O say na sae, my master deir,
For I feir a deadlie storme.

"Late, late yestreen I saw the new moone,
Wi the auld moone in hir arme,
And I feir, I feir, my deir master,
That we will cum to harme."

O our Scots nobles wer richt laith ¹
To weet their crok-heild schoone; 30
Bot lang owre a' the play wer playd,
Thair hats they swam aboone.

O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
With thair fans into their hand,
Or cir they se Sir Patrick Spence
Cum sailing to the land.

O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
Wi thair gold kems in their hair,
Waiting for thair ain ² deir lords,
For they'll se thame na mair. 40

Half owre, half owre to Aberdour,
It's fiftie fadom deip,
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,
Wi the Scots lords at his feit.

¹ loth ² own

ROBIN HOOD'S DEATH AND BURIAL

WHEN Robin Hood and Little John
 Down a down a down a down
 Went oer yon bank of broom,
 Said Robin Hood bold to Little John,
 "We have shot for many a pound."
 Hey, down, a down, a down.

"But I am not able to shoot one shot more,
 My broad arrows will not flee;
 But I have a cousin lives down below,
 Please God, she will bleed me."

10

Now Robin he is to fair Kirkly gone,
 As fast as he can win;¹
 But before he came there, as we do hear,
 He was taken very ill.

And when he came to fair Kirkly-hall,
 He knockd all at the ring,
 But none was so ready as his cousin herself
 For to let bold Robin in.

"Will you please to sit down, cousin Robin," she said,
 "And drink some beer with me?"
 "No, I will neither eat nor drink,
 Till I am blooded by thee."

20

"Well, I have a room, cousin Robin," she said,
 "Which you did never see,
 And if you please to walk therein,
 You blooded by me shall be."

She took him by the lily-white hand,
And led him to a private room,
And there she blooded bold Robin Hood,
While one drop of blood would run down.

30

She blooded him in a vein of the arm,
And locked him up in the room;
Then did he bleed all the live-long day,
Until the next day at noon.

He then bethought him of a casement there,
Thinking for to get down;
But was so weak he could not leap,
He could not get him down.

He then bethought him of his bugle-horn,
Which hung low down to his knee;
He set his horn unto his mouth,
And blew out weak blasts three.

40

Then Little John, when hearing him,
As he sat under a tree,
"I fear my master is now near dead,
He blows so wearily."

Then Little John to fair Kirkly is gone,
As fast as he can dree;¹
But when he came to Kirkly-hall,
He broke locks two or three:

50

Until he came bold Robin to see,
Then he fell on his knee;
"A boon, a boon," cries Little John,
"Master, I beg of thee."

¹ endure

"What is that boon," said Robin Hood,
 "Little John, [thou] begs of me?"
 "It is to burn fair Kirkly-hall,
 And all their nunnery."

"Now nay, now nay," quoth Robin Hood,
 "That boon I'll not grant thee;
 I never hurt woman in all my life,
 Nor men in woman's company.

60

"I never hurt fair maid in all my time,
 Nor at mine end shall it be;
 But give me my bent bow in my hand,
 And a broad arrow I'll let flee,
 And where this arrow is taken up,
 There shall my grave digged be.

"Lay me a green sod under my head,
 And another at my feet;
 And lay my bent bow by my side,
 Which was my music sweet;
 And make my grave of gravel and green,
 Which is most right and meet.

70

"Let me have length and breadth enough,
 With a green sod under my head;
 That they may say, when I am dead,
 Here lies bold Robin Hood."

These words they readily granted him,
 Which did bold Robin please:
 And there they buried bold Robin Hood,
 Within the fair Kirkleys.

80

LYRICS

(Anonymous)

CUCKOO SONG

SUMER is icumen in:

Lhude ¹ sing cuccu! ²Groweth sed, and bloweth ³ med, ⁴And springth the wude nu. ⁵

Sing cuccu!

Awe ⁶ bleteth after lomb;Lhouth ⁷ after calve cu; ⁸

Bulluc sterteth, bucke verteth.

Murie ⁹ sing cuccu!

Cuccu, cuccu, well singes thu, cuccu:

10

Ne swike ¹⁰ thu naver nu.

Sing cuccu, nu, sing cuccu!

Sing cuccu, sing cuccu, nu!

c. 1300.

SPRINGTIME

LENTEN ¹¹ ys come with love to toune,With blosmen and with briddes ¹² rounne, ¹³

That al this blisse bryngeth;

Dayes-eyes ¹⁴ in this dales,Notes suete ¹⁵ of nyhtegales, ¹⁶Uch ¹⁷ foul song singeth.

¹ loudly ² cuckoo ³ blossometh ⁴ meadow ⁵ now ⁶ ewe
⁷ loweth ⁸ cow ⁹ merrily ¹⁰ cease ¹¹ spring ¹² birds'
¹³ whispering ¹⁴ daisies ¹⁵ sweet ¹⁶ nightingales ¹⁷ each

The threstelcoc ¹ him threteth ² oo,³
 Away is huere ⁴ wynter wo,
 When woderove ⁵ springeth;
 This foules singeth ferly ⁶ fele,⁷ 10
 And wlyteth ⁸ on huere wynter wele,⁹
 That al the wode ryngeth.

The rose rayleth ¹⁰ hir rode,¹¹
 The leves on the lyhte ¹² wode
 Waxen al with wille; ¹³
 The mone mandeth ¹⁴ hire bleo,¹⁵
 The lilie is lossom ¹⁶ to seo,
 The fenyl ¹⁷ and the fille; ¹⁸
 Wowes ¹⁹ this wilde drakes;
 Miles ²⁰ murgeth ²¹ huere makes; ²² 20
 Ase strem that striketh ²³ stille,
 Mody ²⁴ meneth,²⁵ so doth mo,²⁶
 Ichot ²⁷ ycham ²⁸ on of tho,²⁹
 For love that likes ³⁰ ille.

The mone mandeth hire lyht,
 So doth the semly sonne bryht,
 When briddes singeth breme; ³¹
 Deawes donketh ³² the dounes,
 Deores ³³ with huere derne ³⁴ rounes,
 Domes ³⁵ forte ³⁶ deme; ³⁷ 30
 Wormes woweth under cloude,³⁸
 Wymmen waxeth wounder proude,
 So wel hit wol hem seme,³⁹

¹ male thrush ² chides ³ ever ⁴ their ⁵ woodruff (an herb)
⁶ wondrously ⁷ many ⁸ cry ⁹ weal ¹⁰ puts on
¹¹ redness ¹² light ¹³ a will ¹⁴ mends ¹⁵ complexion ¹⁶ lovely
¹⁷ fennel ¹⁸ thyme ¹⁹ woo ²⁰ animals ²¹ make merry ²² mates
²³ flows ²⁴ The moody one ²⁵ moaneth ²⁶ others ²⁷ I know
²⁸ I am ²⁹ those ³⁰ pleases ³¹ loudly ³² make dank ³³ lovers
³⁴ secret ³⁵ fates ³⁶ to ³⁷ seal ³⁸ snakes woo under clod
³⁹ become

Yef¹ me shal wonte² wille of on:
 This wunne weole³ I wole for-gon,
 And wyht in wode be fleme.⁴

c. 1300

A HYMN TO THE VIRGIN

OF ON that is so fayr and bright,
Velut maris stella,
 Brighter than the day is light,
Parens et puella:
 Ic⁵ crie to the, thou se to me,
 Levedy,⁶ preye thi sone for me,
Tam pia,
 That ic mote come to the,
Maria.

Al this world was for-lore,⁷
Eva peccatrice,
 Tyl our lord was y-bore
De te genetrice.
 With *ave* it went away,
 Thuster⁸ nyth⁹ and comz the day
Salutis;
 The welle springeth ut¹⁰ of the
Virtutis.

10

Levedi, flour of alle thing,
Rosa sine spina,
 Thu bere Jhesu, hevene king,
Gratia divina;
 Of alle thu berst the pris,¹¹
 Levedi, quene of parays¹²

20

¹ if ² lack ³ this joyful boon ⁴ And be a banished wight
 in the woods ⁵ I ⁶ Lady ⁷ lost ⁸ dark ⁹ night ¹⁰ out
¹¹ prize ¹² paradise

*Electa.*Mayde milde, moder *es**Effecta.*

Of kare conseil thou ert best,

Felix fecundata,

Of alle wery thou ert rest,

30

*Mater honorata.*Bisek him wiz ¹ milde mod,²That for ous alle sad ³ is ⁴ blod*In cruce,*

That we moten comen til him

*In luce.*Wel he wot ⁵ he is thi sone.*Ventre quem portasti;*He wyl nout werne ⁶ the thi bone,*Parvum quem lactasti;*

40

So hende ⁷ and so god he his,⁸He havet ⁹ brout ous to blis*Superni,*That havez ⁹ hi-dut ¹⁰ the foule put ¹¹*Infernî.*

c. 1300

ALYSOUN

BYTUENE Mershe and Averil

When spray beginneth to springe,

The lutel foul hath hire wyl

On hyre lud ¹² to synge;Ich ¹³ libbe ¹⁴ in love-longinge

¹ with ² mind ³ shed ⁴ his ⁵ knows ⁶ refuse ⁷ gra-
 cious ⁸ is ⁹ has ¹⁰ concealed ¹¹ pit ¹² in her language
¹³ I ¹⁴ live

For semlokest ¹ of alle thynges,
 He ² may me blisse bringe,
 Icham ³ in hire baundoun.⁴
 An hendy hap ichabbe yhent,⁵
 Ichot ⁶ from hevene it is me sent, 10
 From alle wymmen mi love is lent ⁷
 Ant lyht ⁸ on Alysoun.

On heu hire her ⁹ is fayr ynoh,
 Hire browe broune, hire eye blake,
 With lossum ¹⁰ chere he on me loh; ¹¹
 With middel ¹² smal and wel y-make;
 Bote he me wolle to hire take
 Forte ¹³ buen ¹⁴ hire owen make,¹⁵
 Longe to lyven ichulle ¹⁶ forsake,
 And feye ¹⁷ fallen adoun. 20
 An hendy hap, etc.

Nihtes when I wende ¹⁸ and wake,
 Forthi ¹⁹ myn wonges waxeth won; ²⁰
 Levedi,²¹ al for thine sake
 Longinge is ylent me on ²²
 In world nis non so wytermon ²³
 That al hire bounte telle con;
 Hire swyre ²⁴ is whittore then the swon,
 And feyrest may ²⁵ in toune.
 An hendy hap, etc. 30

Icham for wowyng ²⁶ al forwake,²⁷
 Wery so water in wore; ²⁸

¹ the fairest ² she ³ I am ⁴ power ⁵ A happy lot I have
 received ⁶ I know ⁷ gone ⁸ lighted ⁹ hair ¹⁰ lovesome
¹¹ laughed ¹² waist ¹³ to ¹⁴ be ¹⁵ mate ¹⁶ I shall ¹⁷ doomed
 to death ¹⁸ turn ¹⁹ therefore ²⁰ cheeks grow wan ²¹ lady
²² has come to me ²³ wise man ²⁴ neck ²⁵ maid ²⁶ wooing
²⁷ worn with vigils ²⁸ as water in a weir

Lest eny reve ¹ me my make,
 Ichabbe y-yernèd yore.²
 Betere is tholien whyle sore ³
 Then mournen evermore.
 Geynes ⁴ under gore,⁵
 Herkne to my roun.⁶
 An hendy hap, etc.

c. 1300

A PLEA FOR PITY

With longyng I am lad,
 On molde ⁷ I waxe mad,
allix A maide marreth me;
 I grede,⁸ I grone, un-glad,
 For selden I am sad ⁹
 That semly forte se;
 Levedi, thou rewe me!
 To routhe thou havest me rad;¹⁰
 Be bote of that I bad,¹¹
 My lyf is long on the.

10

Levedy of alle londe,
 Les ¹² me out of bonde,
 Broht icham in wo;
 Have resting on honde,
 And sent thou me thi sonde,¹³
 Sone, er thou me slo;¹⁴
 My reste is with the ro:¹⁵
 Thah men to me han onde,¹⁶
 To love nuly ¹⁷ noht wonde,¹⁸
 Ne lete for non of tho.¹⁹

20

¹ deprive ² for a long time ³ It is better to bear pain awhile
⁴ comeliest ⁵ attire ⁶ tale ⁷ earth ⁸ cry out ⁹ satisfied
¹⁰ advised ¹¹ asked ¹² loose ¹³ message ¹⁴ slayest ¹⁵ roe
¹⁶ jealousy ¹⁷ will I not ¹⁸ fear ¹⁹ Nor cease for any of them

Levedi, with al my miht
 My love is on the liht,
 To menske ¹ when I may;
 — Thou rew and red ² me ryht,
 To dethe thou havest me diht,³
 I deye longe er my day;
 Thou leve ⁴ upon my lay.
 Treuthe ichave the plyht,
 To don that ich have hyht,⁵
 Whil mi lif leste may.

30

✓ Lylie-whyht hue is,
 Hire rode ⁶ so rose on rys,⁷
 That reveth ⁸ me mi rest.
 Wymmon war ⁹ and wys,
 Of prude hue bereth the pris,¹⁰
 Burde ¹¹ on of the best;
 This wommon woneth ¹² by west,
 Brihtest under bys;¹³
 Hevene I tolde ¹⁴ al his
 That o nyht were hire gest.

40

c. 1300

THE QUEM-QUÆRITIS TROPE

DE RESURRECTIONE DOMINI

Int[errogatio] :

Quem quæritis in sepulchro, [o] Christicolæ?

R[esponsio] :

Jesum Nazarenum crucifixum, o cælicolæ.

[Angeli:]

*Non est hic; surrexit, sicut prædixerat.**Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit de sepulchro.*

¹ honor	² teach	³ prepared	⁴ believe	⁵ promised	⁶ com-
plexion	⁷ stalk	⁸ deprives	⁹ careful	¹⁰ prize	¹¹ lady
¹² lives	¹³ purple	¹⁴ should consider			

OF THE LORD'S RESURRECTION

Question [of the angels]:

Whom seek ye in the sepulchre, O followers of Christ?

Answer [of the Marys]:

Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified, O celestial ones.

[The angels:]

He is not here; he is risen, just as he foretold.

Go, announce that he is risen from the sepulchre.

9th c.

SEPULCHRUM

[Easter.]

WHILE the third lesson is being chanted, let four brethren vest themselves; of whom let one, vested in an alb, enter as if to take part in the service, and let him without being observed approach the place of the sepulchre, and there, holding a palm in his hand, let him sit down quietly. While the third responsory is being sung, let the remaining three follow, all of them vested in copes, and carrying in their hands censers filled with incense; and slowly, in the manner of seeking something, let them come before the place of the sepulchre. These things are done in imitation of the angel seated in the monument, and of the women coming with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. When therefore that one seated shall see the three, as if straying about and seeking something, approach him, let him begin in a dulcet voice of medium pitch to sing:

Whom seek ye in the sepulchre, O followers of Christ?

When he has sung this to the end, let the three respond in unison:

Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified, O celestial one.

To whom that one:

*He is not here; he is risen, just as he foretold.
Go, announce that he is risen from the dead.*

At the word of this command let those three turn themselves to the choir, saying:

*Alleluia! The Lord is risen to-day,
The strong lion, the Christ, the Son of God.
Give thanks to God, huzza!*

This said, let the former, again seating himself, as if recalling them, sing the anthem:

*Come, and see the place where the Lord was laid.
Alleluia! Alleluia!*

And saying this, let him rise, and let him lift the veil and show them the place bare of the cross, but only the cloths laid there with which the cross was wrapped. Seeing which, let them set down the censers which they carried into the same sepulchre, and let them take up the cloth and spread it out before the eyes of the clergy; and, as if making known that the Lord had risen and was not now therein wrapped, let them sing this anthem:

*The Lord is risen from the sepulchre,
Who for us hung upon the cross.*

And let them place the cloth upon the altar. The anthem being ended, let the Prior, rejoicing with them at the triumph of our King, in that, having conquered death, he arose, begin the hymn:

We praise thee, O God.

This begun, all the bells chime out together.

c. 970

THE SHEPHERDS

[At one end of the pageant, the open fields where the three Shepherds tend their sheep; at the other end, the home of Mak and his wife Gill. Enter the First Shepherd, half frozen with the cold.]

I. PASTOR. Lord, what these weders ar cold! And I
am yll happyd.¹

I am nere-hande dold,² so long haue I nappyd.

My legys thay fold, my fyngers ar chappyd;

It is not as I wold, for I am al lappyd

In sorrow.

In stormes and tempest,

Now in the eest, now in the west,

Wo is hym has neuer rest

Myd-day nor morrow!

Bot we sely³ shepardes that walkys on the moore, 10

In fayth, we are nere-handys outt of the doore!

No wonder, as it standys, if we be poore,

For the tylthe of oure landys lyys falow as the floore,

As ye ken.

We ar so hamyd,⁴

¹ clothed ² nearly numb ³ poor ⁴ crippled

Fox-taxed, and ramyd,¹
 We ar mayde hand-tamyd
 With thyse gentlery men.

Thus thay refe² vs oure reste —Oure Lady theym
 wary!³

These men that ar lord-fest⁴ thay cause the ploghe
 tary. 20

That, men say, is for the best; we fynde it contrary.
 Thus ar husbandys opprest in po[i]nte to myscary
 On lyfe.

Thus hold thay vs hunder;
 Thus thay bryng vs in blonder!
 It were greatte wonder
 And euer shuld we thryfe.

Ther shall com a swane as prowde as a po,⁵
 He must borow my wane,⁶ my ploghe also;
 Then I am full fane to graunt or he go. 30
 Thus lyf we in payne, anger, and wo,
 By nyght and day.

He must haue if he langyd,
 If I shud forgang⁷ it.
 I were better be hangyd
 Then oones say hym nay.

For may he gett a paynt slefe,⁸ or a broche, now on
 dayes,

Wo is hym that hym grefe or onys agane says!
 Dar noman hym reprefe what mastery he mays.
 And yit may noman lefe⁹ oone word that he says, 40
 No letter.

He can make purveance,

¹ over-taxed and crushed ² rob ³ curse ⁴ bound to a lord
⁵ peacock ⁶ wagon ⁷ have to do without it ⁸ embroidered
 sleeve ⁹ believe

With boste and bragance;
 And all is thurgh maintenance
 Of men that are gretter.

It dos me good, as I walk thus by myn oone,
 Of this world for to talk in maner of mone.
 To my shepe wyll I stalk and herkyn anone;
 Ther abyde on a balk,¹ or sytt on a stone,
 Full soyne.²

50

For I trowe, perde,
 Trew men if thay be,
 We gett more compane
 Or it be noyne.³

[*Enter the Second Shepherd. He does not see the
 First Shepherd.*]

II. PASTOR. Benste⁴ and Dominus! What may this
 bemeyne?

Why fares this world thus? Oft haue we not sene!
 Lord, thyse weders are spytus,⁵ and the winds full
 kene;

And the frostys so hydus thay water myn eeyne;

(No ly,

Now in dry, now in wete,

60

Now in snaw, now in slete,

When my shone freys to my fete,

It is not all esy.

Bot, as far as I ken, or yit as I go,
 We sely wedmen dre⁶ mekyll wo;
 We haue sorow then and then, it fallys oft so.
 Sely Capyle, oure hen, both to and fro
 She kakyls;

Bot begyn she to crok,

¹ ridge ² soon ³ noon ⁴ Benedicite ⁵ spiteful ⁶ suffer

To groyne or [to clo]k,
 Wo is hym oure cok,
 For he is in the shekyls.¹

70

These men that ar wed haue not all thare wyll.
 When they ar full hard sted,² thay sygh full styll.
 God wayte³ thay ar led full hard and full yll;
 In bower nor in bed thay say noght thertll.⁴

This tyde,
 My parte haue I fun—
 I know my lesson!—
 Who is hym that is bun,⁵
 For he must abyde.

80

Bot now late in oure lyfys—a meruell to me,
 That I thynk my hart ryfys⁶ sich wonders to see,
 What that destany dryfys, it shuld so be!—
 Som men wyll have two wyfys, and som men thre
 In store.

Som ar wo that has any!
 Bot so far can I,—
 Wo is hym that has many,
 For he felys sore.

90

[Addressing the audience.]

Bot, yong men, of wowyng, for God that you boght,
 Be well war of wedyng, and thynk in youre thoght,
 "Had I wyst" is a thyng it seruys of noght.
 Mekyll⁷ styll mowrnyng has wedyng home broght,
 And grefys,

With many a sharp showre:
 For thou may cach in an owre

¹ shackles ² situated ³ knows ⁴ thereto ⁵ bound ⁶ breaks
⁷ much

That shall savour fulle sowre
As long as thou lyffys.

For, as euer red I pystyll,¹ I haue oone to my fere,² 100
As sharp as a thystyll, as rughe as a brere;
She is browyd lyke a brystyll, with a sowre-loten
chere³;

Had she oones wett hyr whystyll, she couth syng full
clere

Hyr Pater Noster.

She is as greatt as a whall;
She has a galon of gall;
By hym that dyed for vs all,
I wald I had ryn to I had lost hir!

[*The First Shepherd interrupts him.*]

I. PASTOR. God! looke ouer the raw!⁴
Full defly⁵ ye stand.

II. PASTOR. Yee, the dewill in thi maw, so tariand!⁶ 110
Sagh thou awro⁷ of Daw?

I. PASTOR. Yee, on a ley-land⁸
Hard I hym blaw. He commys here at hand
Not far.

Stand styll.

II. PASTOR. Qwhy?

I. PASTOR. For he commys, hope I.

II. PASTOR. He wyll make vs both a ly
Bot if we be war.⁹

[*Enter the Third Shepherd, a boy.*]

¹ epistle, i.e. in the New Testament ² companion ³ sour face
⁴ row ⁵ deaf ⁶ tarrying ⁷ anywhere ⁸ unploughed land
⁹ wary

III. PASTOR. Crystys crosse me spede, and Sant Nycho-
las!

Ther-of had I nede; it is wars then it was.

Whoso couthe take hede and lett the world pas, 120

It is euer in drede and brekyll as glas,

And slyths.¹

This world fowre ² neuer so,

With meruels mo and mo,

Now in weyll, now in wo,

And all thyng wryths.³

Was neuer syn Noe floode sich floodys seyn,

Wyndys and ranys so rude, and stormes so keyn!

Som stamerd, some stod in dowte, as I weyn.

Now God turne all to good! I say as I mene, 130

For ponder.

These floodys so thay drowne,

Both in feyldys and in towne,

And berys all downe;

And that is a wonder.

We that walk on the nyghtys oure catell to kepe,

We se sodan syghtys when othere men slepe. [*Spying
the others.*]

Yit me-thynk my hart lyghtys; ⁴ I se shrewys pepe.

Ye ar two tall wyghtys! I wyll gyf my shepe

A turne. 140

Bot full yll haue I ment;

As I walk on this bent,⁵

I may lyghtly repent,

My toes if I spurne.

[*The other two advance.*]

¹ slides ² fared ³ writhes ⁴ lightens ⁵ bare field

A, sir, God you saue! and master myne!

A drynk fayn wold I haue, and somewhat to dyne.

I. PASTOR. Crystys curs, my knaue, thou art a ledyr
hyne!¹

II. PASTOR. What! the boy lyst rave!

Abyde vnto syne²

We haue mayde it.

Yll thryft on thy pate!

150

Though the shrew cam late,

Yit is he in state

To dyne—if he had it.

III. PASTOR. Sich seruandys as I, that swettys and
swynkys,³

Etys oure brede full dry; and that me forthynkys.⁴

We are oft weytt and wery when mastermen wynkys;⁵

Yit commys full lately both dyners and drynkys.

Bot nately⁶

Both oure dame and oure syre,

When we haue ryn in the myre,

160

Thay can nyp⁷ at oure hyre,

And pay vs full lately.

Bot here my trouth, master: for the fayr that ye make,

I shall do thereafter,—wyrk as I take,⁸

I shall do a lytyll, sir, and emang euer lake;⁹

For yit lay my soper neuer on my stomake

In feyldys.

Whereto shude I threpe?¹⁰

With my staf can I lepe;

And men say “Lyght chepe¹¹

170

Letherly¹² for-yeldys.”

¹ worthless hind ² until after ³ labor ⁴ displeases ⁵ sleep
⁶ quickly ⁷ reduce ⁸ receive ⁹ play ¹⁰ argue ¹¹ cheap
bargain ¹² badly

I. PASTOR. Thou were an yll lad to ryde on wowyng
With a man that had bot lytyll of spendyng.

II. PASTOR. Peasse, boy, I bad! No more iangling,
Or I shall make the full rad,¹ by the heuens kyng,
With thy gawdys.²

Wher ar oure shepe, boy, we skorne?

III. PASTOR. Sir, this same day at morne
I thaym left in the corne,
When thay rang lawdys.³

180

They haue pasture good, thay can not go wrong.

I. PASTOR. That is right. By the roode, thyse nyghtys
are long!

Yit I wold, or we yode,⁴ oone gaf vs a song.

II. PASTOR. So I thocht as I stode, to myrth vs emong.

III. PASTOR. I grauntt.

I. PASTOR. Lett me syng the tenory.

II. PASTOR. And I the tryble so hye.

III. PASTOR. Then the meyne fallys to me.
Lett se how ye chauntt. [*They sing.*]

[*Then Mak enters with a cloak drawn over his tunic.*]

MAK. Now, Lord, for thy naymes sevyng,
that made both moyn and starnes

190

Well mo then I can meuen,⁵ thi will, Lorde, of me
tharnys.⁶

I am all vneuen; that moves oft my harnes.⁷

Now wold God I were in heuen, for the[re] wepe no
barnes⁸

So styll.⁹

I. PASTOR. Who is that pypys so poore?

MAK. Wold God ye wyst how I foore!¹⁰

¹ afraid ² tricks ³ lauds, the first of the day hours of the
Church ⁴ went ⁵ name ⁶ lacks ⁷ brains ⁸ children
⁹ continuously ¹⁰ fared

Lo, a man that walkys on the moore,
And has not all his wyll!

II. PASTOR. MAK, where has thou gon? tell vs tythyng.

III. PASTOR. Is he commen? Then ylkon¹ take hede
to his thyng. 200

[*He takes the cloak from him.*]

MAK. What! ich² be a yoman, I]ch[tell you, of the
king;

The self and the same, sond³ from a greatt lordyng,
And sich.

Fy on you! Goyth hence!

Out of my presence!

I[ch] must haue reuerence.

Why, who be ich?

I. PASTOR. Why make ye it so qwaynt?⁴ Mak, ye do
wrang.

II. PASTOR. Bot, Mak, lyst ye saynt?⁵ I trow that ye
lang.⁶

III. PASTOR. I trow the shrew can paynt!⁷
The dewyll myght hym hang! — 210

MAK. Ich shall make complaynt, and make you all to
thwang⁸

At a worde;

And tell euyn how ye doth.

I. PASTOR. Bot, Mak, is that sothe?

Now take outt that sothren tothe,⁹

And sett in a torde!

II. PASTOR. Mak, the dewill in youre ee!

A stroke wold I leyne¹⁰ you.

[*Strikes him.*]

¹ every one ² I ³ messenger ⁴ strange ⁵ deceive ⁶ long
to do so ⁷ deceive ⁸ be flogged ⁹ Mak has been imitating the
Southern dialect. ¹⁰ lend

III. PASTOR. Mak, know ye not me? By God, I couthe
teyn ¹ you.

[*Drawing back to strike him.*]

MAK. God, looke you all thre! Me thocht I had sene
you.

Ye ar a fare compane.

I. PASTOR. Can ye now mene ² you? 220

II. PASTOR. Shrew[d] iape! ³

Thus late as thou goys,

What wyll men suppos?

And thou has an yll noys ⁴

Of stelyng of shepe.

MAK. And I am trew as steyll: all men waytt! ⁵

Bot a sekenes I feyll that haldys me full haytt; ⁶

My belly farys not weyll, it is out of astate.

III. PASTOR. Seldom lyys the dewyll dede by the
gate! ⁷

MAK. Therfor

230

Full sore am I and yll;

If I stande stone styll,

I ete not an nedyll

Thys moneth and more.

I. PASTOR. How farys thi wyff? by my hoode, how
farys sho?

MAK. Lyys walteryng, ⁸ by the roode, by the fyere, lo!

And a howse full of brude. ⁹ She drynkys well, to;

Yll spede othere good that she wyll do

Bot so!

Etys as fast as she can;

240

And ilk ¹⁰ yere that commys to man

She bryngys furth a lakan, ¹¹—

And som yeres two.

¹ injure ² behave yourself ³ clever joke ⁴ reputation ⁵ know
⁶ hot ⁷ path ⁸ rolling about ⁹ children ¹⁰ every ¹¹ baby

Bot were I not more gracyus and ryhere be far,
I were eten outt of howse and of harbar.

Yit is she a fowll dowse ¹ if ye com nar;
Ther is none that trowse nor knowys a war ²

Then ken I.

Now wyll ye se what I profer?

To gyf all in my cofer

250

To-morne at next ³ to offer

Hyr hed-mas penny.⁴

II. PASTOR. I wote ⁵ so forwakyd ⁶ is none in this
shyre.

I wold slepe, if I takyd les to my hyere.

III. PASTOR. I am cold and nakyd, and wold haue a
fyere.

I. PASTOR. I am wery, for-rakyd,⁷ and run in the myre.
Wake thou!

II. PASTOR. Nay, I wyll lyg downe by,
For I must slepe, truly.

III. PASTOR. As good a mans son was I
As any of you.

260

Bot, Mak, com heder! Betwene shall thou lyg lowne.
MAK. Then myght I lett ⁸ you, bedene,⁹ of that ye wold
rowne,¹⁰

.....
.....¹¹

[*They lie down.*]

[MAK.] No dred.

Fro my top to my too,

Manus tuas commendo,.....

¹ slut ² worse ³ the following morning ⁴ for her funeral
⁵ know ⁶ worn out ⁷ tired ⁸ hinder ⁹ of course ¹⁰ whis-
per ¹¹ a lacuna in the MS.

Poncio Pilato,

Cryst crosse me spede!

[*Then he rises up, the shepherds being asleep, and says:*]

Now were tyme for a man that lakkys what he wold
To stalk preuely than vnto a fold, 270

And neemly ¹ to wyrk than, and be not to bold,
For he might aby ² the bargan, if it were told,

At the endyng.

Now were tyme for to reyll; ³

Bot he nedys good counsell

That fayn wold fare weyll,

And has bot lytyll spendyng.

[*Pretends to be a magician.*]

Bot abowte you a serkyll ⁴ as rownde as a moyn, ⁵

To I haue done that I wyll, tyll that it be noyn, ⁶

That ye lyg stone styll to that I haue doyne. 280

And I shall say thertyll of good wordys a foyne. ⁷

On hight

Ouer youre heydys my hand I lyft:

Outt go youre een! Fordo your syght!—

Bot yit I must make better shyft

And it be right.

[*The shepherds begin to snore.*]

Lord, what! thay slepe hard! that may ye all here.

Was I neuer a shepard, bot now wyll I lere. ⁸

If the flock he skard, yit shall I nyp nere.

[*He approaches the sheep.*]

¹ quickly ² pay for ³ set about it ⁴ circle ⁵ moon
⁶ noon ⁷ few ⁸ learn

How! Drawes hederward! Now mendys oure chere 290
From sorow.

A fatt shepe I dar say!
A good flese dar I lay!
Eft-whyte¹ when I may,
Bot this will I borow.

[Takes the sheep, and crosses to his home.]

How, Gyll, art thou in? Gett vs som lyght.
Vxor eius. Who makys sich dyn this tyme of the
nyght?

I am sett for to spyn; I hope not I myght
Ryse a penny to wyn. I shrew them on hight
So farys! 300

A huswyff that has bene
To be rasyd² thus betwene!
Here may no note³ be sene
For sich small charys.⁴

MAK. Good wyff, open the hek!⁵ Seys thou not what
I bryng?

Vxor. I may thole⁶ the dray the snek.⁷ A, com in, my
swetyng!

MAK. Yee, thou thar not rek⁸ of my long standyng.

Vxor. By the nakyd nek art thou lyke for to hyng.

MAK. Do way!

I am worthy my mete; 310
For in a strate can I gett
More then thay that swynke and swette
All the long day.

Thus it fell to my lott, Gyll! I had sich grace.

[He shows her the sheep.]

¹ pay back ² has to be aroused ³ work ⁴ chores ⁵ door
⁶ allow ⁷ draw the latch ⁸ you did not think about

VXOR. It were a fowll blott to be hanged for the case.

MAK. I haue skapyd, Ielott, oft as hard a glase.¹

VXOR. Bot so long goys the pott to the water, men says,
At last

Comys it home broken.

MAK. Well knowe I the token;

Bot let it neuer be spoken,

Bot com and help fast.

320

I wold he were slayn; I lyst well etc.

This twelmonthe was I not so fayn of oone shepe mete.

VXOR. Com thay or ² he be slayn and here the shepe
blete—

MAK. Then myght I be tane! That were a cold swette!

[He begins to tremble.]

Go spar

The gaytt doore.³

VXOR. Yis, Mak,

For and thay com at thy bak—

MAK. Then myght I by for all the pak!

The dewill of the war!

330

VXOR. A good bowrde ⁴ haue I spied,—syn thou can
none.

Here shall we hym hyde to thay be gone,—

In my credyll abyde,—lett me alone,

And I shall lyg besyde in chylbed, and grone.

MAK. Thou red!⁵

And I shall say thou was lyght ⁶

Of a knaue ⁷ childe this nyght.

VXOR. Now well is me day bright,

That euer was I bred!

340

¹ blow ² before ³ front door ⁴ trick ⁵ Get thee ready
⁶ delivered ⁷ boy child

This is a good gyse¹ and a far cast!²
 Yit a woman avyse helpys at the last!
 I wote neuer who spyse. Agane go thou fast.
 MAK. Bot I com or thay ryse, els blawes a cold blast!
 I wyll go slepe.

[*Mak returns to the shepherds, and resumes his place.*]
 Yit slepys all this meneye;³
 And I shall go stalk preuely,
 As it had neuer bene I
 That I caryed thare shepe.

[*The First and Second Shepherds awake.*]

I. PASTOR. *Resurrex a mortuis!* Haue hald my
 hand. 350

Iudas carnas dominus! I may not well stand:
 My foytt slepys, by Ihesus; and I water fastand.
 I thoght that we layd vs full nere Yngland.

II. PASTOR. A ye!
 Lord, what I haue slept weyll.
 As fresh as an eyll,
 As lyght I me feyll
 As leyfe on a tre.

[*The Third Shepherd awakes.*]

III. PASTOR. Benste be here-in! so my body qwakys,
 My hart is outt of skyn, what-so it makys. 360
 Who makys all this dyn? So my browes blakys.⁴
 To the dowore⁵ wyll I wyn.⁶ Harke, felows, wakys!

We were fowre:
 Se ye awre⁷ of Mak now?

I. PASTOR. We were vp or thou.

II. PASTOR. Man, I gyf God a-vowe,
 Yit yede he nawre.⁸

¹ disguise ² chance ³ company ⁴ grows black ⁵ door
⁶ go ⁷ anything ⁸ went he nowhere

III. PASTOR. Me thoght he was lapt in a wolfe skyn.

I. PASTOR. So are many hapt now—namely, within.

III. PASTOR. When we had long napt, me thoght with
a gyn¹

A fatt shepe he trapt; bot he mayde no dyn.

II. PASTOR. Be styll!

Thi dreme makys the woode;²

It is bot fantom, by the roode.

I. PASTOR. Now God turne all to good,

If it be his wyll!

[*They awaken Mak.*]

II. PASTOR. Ryse, Mak! For shame! thou lygys right
lang.

MAK. Now Crystys holy name be vs emang!

What is this, for Sant Iame? I may not well gang!

I trow I be the same. A! my nek has lygen wrang 380
Enoghe.

[*They help him to his feet.*]

Mekill thank! Syn yister euen,

Now, by Sant Strevyn,³

I was flayd with a swevyn,⁴

My hart out of-sloghe.⁵

I thoght Gyll began to crok and trauell full sad,

Welner⁶ at the fyrst cok of a yong lad

For to mend oure flok. Then be I neuer glad;

I haue tow on my rok⁷ more then euer I had.

A, my heede!

390

A house full of yong tharnes!⁸

The dewill knok outt thare harnes!

Wo is hym has many barnes,

And therto lytyll brede!

¹snare ²mad ³Stephen ⁴dream ⁵that slew my heart
⁶well nigh ⁷distaff ⁸bellies

I must go home, by youre lefe, to Gyll, as I thoght.
 I pray you looke my slefe that I steyll noght;
 I am loth you to grefe or from you take oght.

[*Mak leaves them.*]

III. PASTOR. Go furth; yll myght thou chefe!¹ Now
 wold I we soght,

This morne,

400

That we had all oure store.

I. PASTOR. Bot I will go before;

Let vs mete.

II. PASTOR. Whore?

III. PASTOR. At the crokyd thorne.

[*Exeunt.*]

[*Mak arrives at his home.*]

MAK. Vndo this doore! Who is here?

How long shall I stand?

VXOR EIUS. Who makys sich a bere?² Now walk in the
 wenyand!³

MAK. A, Gyll, what chere? It is I, Mak, youre hus-
 bande.

VXOR. Then may we se here the dewill in a bande,
 Syr Gyle.

Lo, he commys with a lote⁴

As he were holden in the throte.

410

I may not syt at my note⁵

A hand-lang while.⁶

MAK. Wyll ye here what fare she makys to gett hir a
 glose?⁷

And dos noght bot lakys,⁸ and clowse hir toose.⁹

¹ prosper ² noise ³ in the waning of the moon (an unlucky
 time) ⁴ noise (the allusion is to hanging) ⁵ work ⁶ an instant
⁷ excuse ⁸ play ⁹ scratch her toes

VXOR. Why, who wanders? who wakys? who commys?
who gose?

Who brewys? who bakys? who makys me thus hose?

And than,

It is rewthe to beholde,

Now in hote, now in colde,

Full wofull is the householde

420

That wantys a woman.

Bot what ende has thou mayde with the hyrdys.¹ Mak?

MAK. The last worde that thay sayde, when I turnyd
my bak,

Thay wold looke that thay hade thare shepe all the
pak.

I hope thay wyll nott be well payde when thay thare
shepe lak,

Perde.

Bot how-so the gam gose,

To me thay wyll suppose,

And make a fowll noyse,

And cry outt apon me.

430

Bot thou must do as thou hyght.²

VXOR. I accorde me thertyll;

I shall swedyll³ hym right in my credyll.

If it were a gretter slyght,⁴ yit couthe I help tyll.

I wyll lyg downe stright. Com hap⁵ me.

MAK. I wyll.

[*He tucks her in bed.*]

VXOR. Behynde!

Com Coll and his maroo,⁶

Thay will nyp vs full naroo.

¹ shepherds ² promised ³ swaddle ⁴ trick ⁵ cover me up
⁶ mate

MAK. Bot I may cry "Out haroo!"

The shepe if thay fynde.

Vxor. Harken ay when thay call; thay will com
onone. 440

Com and make redy all; and syng by thy oone;

Syng lullay thou shall, for I must grone

And cry outt by the wall on Mary and Iohn,

For sore.

Syng lullay on fast

When thou heris at the last;

And bot I play a fals cast,

Trust me no more!

[*The Shepherds return, and speak at the other end of
the pageant.*]

III. PASTOR. A, Coll, good morne! Why slepys thou
nott?

I. PASTOR. Alas, that euer was I borne! we haue a
fowll blott. 450

A fat wedir ¹ haue we lorne.

III. PASTOR. Mary, Godys forbott!

II. PASTOR. Who shuld do vs that skorne? That were
a fowll spott.

I. PASTOR. Som shrewe.

I haue soght with my dogys

All Horbery Shrogys,²

And of fefteyn hogys

Fond I bot oone ewe.

III. PASTOR. Now trow ³ me, if ye will; by Sant Thomas
of Kent, 460

Ayther Mak or Gyll was at that assent.

¹ sheep ² Horbury thickets, four miles from Wakefield ³ believe

I. PASTOR. Peasse, man! Be still! I sagh when he
went.

Thou sklanders hym yll. Thou aght to repent
Goode spede.

II. PASTOR. Now as euer myght I the,¹
If I shuld euyne here de,
I wold say it were he
That dyd that same dede.

III. PASTOR. Go we theder, I rede,² and ryn on oure
feete.

Shall I neuer ete brede the sothe to I wytt.³

I. PASTOR. Nor drynk in my heede with hym tyll I
mete.

II. PASTOR. I wyll rest in no stede tyll that I hym.
grete, 470

My brothere.

Oone I will hight:⁴

Tyll I se hym in sight

Shall I neuer slepe one nyght

Ther I do anothere.

[As the shepherds approach, Mak's wife begins to
groan, and Mak, sitting by the cradle, to sing a
lullaby.]

III. PASTOR. Will ye here how thay hak?⁵ Oure syre
lyst croyne.⁶

I. PASTOR. Hard I neuer none crak⁷ so clere out of
toyne!⁸

Call on hym.

II. PASTOR. Mak! vndo youre doore soyne.

MAK. Who is that spak as it were noyne

On loft?

480

¹ thrive ² advise ³ until I know the truth ⁴ one thing will
I promise ⁵ sing ⁶ croon ⁷ bawl ⁸ tune

Who is that, I say?

III. PASTOR. Goode fellowse, were it day.

MAK. [*Opening the door.*] As far as ye may,
Good, spekys soft,

Ouer a seke womans heede that is at maylleasse;¹

I had leuer be dede or she had any dyseasse²

Vxor. Go to an othere stede! I may not well qweasse.³

Ich fote that ye trede goys thorow my nese.⁴

So hee!

I. PASTOR. Tell vs, Mak, if ye may, 490

How fare ye, I say?

MAK. Bot ar ye in this towne to-day?

Now how fare ye?

Ye haue ryn in the myre, and ar weytt yit.

I shall make you a fyre if ye will syt.

A nores⁵ wold I hyre, thynk ye on yit.

Well qwytt is my hyre; my dreme—this is it,

[*Points to the cradle.*]

A seson.

I haue barnes, if ye knew,

Well mo then enewe.

500

Bot we must drynk as we brew, — *r*

And that is bot reson.

I wold ye dynyd or ye yode. Me thynk that ye swette.

II. PASTOR. Nay, nawther mendys oure mode drynke
nor mette.

MAK. Why, sir, alys you oght bot goode?

III. PASTOR. Yee, oure shepe that we gett
Ar stollyn as thay yode. Oure los is grette.

MAK. Syrs, drynkys!

¹ in discomfort

² annoyance

³ breathe

⁴ nose

⁵ nurse

Had I bene thore,
Som shuld haue boght it full sore.

I. PASTOR. Mary, som men trowes that ye wore; 510
And that vs forthynkys.¹

I. PASTOR. Mak, som men trowys that it shuld be ye.

III. PASTOR. Ayther ye or youre spouse, so say we.

MAK. Now, if ye haue suspowse² to Gill, or to me,
Com and rype oure howse, and then may ye se

Who had hir.

If I any shepe fott,³

Aythor cow or stott,⁴

And Gyll, my wyfe, rose nott

Here syn she lade hir,

520

As I am true and lele, to God here I pray

That this be the fyrst mele that I shall ete this day.

[*Points to the cradle.*]

I. PASTOR. Mak, as haue I ceyll,⁵ avyse the, I say;

He lernyd tymely to steyll that couth not say nay.

[*The Shepherds begin the search.*]

VXOR. I swelt!⁶

Outt, thefys, fro my wonys!⁷

Ye com to rob vs, for the nonys.

MAK. Here ye not how she gronys?

Youre hartys shuld melt.

VXOR. Outt, thefys, fro my barne! Negh hym not
thor! 530

MAK. Wyst ye how she had farne,⁸ youre hartys wold
be sore.

Ye do wrang, I you warne, that thus commys before

¹ troubles ² suspicion ³ fetched ⁴ stoat ⁵ bliss ⁶ faint
⁷ house ⁸ labored

To a woman that has farne. Bot I say no more!

Vxor. A, my medyll!

I pray to God so mylde,

If euer I you begyld,

That I ete this chylde

That lygys in this credyll.

MAK. Peasse, woman, for Godys payn! and cry not so!

Thou spyllys thy brane, and makys me full wo. 540

II. PASTOR. I trow oure shepe be slayn. What finde
ye two?

III. PASTOR. All wyrk we in vayn; as well may we go.

Bot, hatters,¹

I can fynde no flesh,

Hard nor nesh,²

Salt nor fresh,

Bot two tome³ platers.

Whik⁴ catell bot this, tame nor wylde,

None, as haue I blys, as lowde as he smylde.⁵

Vxor. No, so God me blys, and gyf me ioy of my
chylde! 550

I. PASTOR. We haue merkyd amys; I hold vs begyld.

II. PASTOR. Syr, don.

[*Addressing Mak at the cradle.*]

Syr, Oure Lady hym saue!

Is youre chyld a knaue?

MAK. Any lord myght hym haue,

This chyld to his son.

When he wakyns he kyppys⁶ that ioy is to se.

III. PASTOR. In good tyme to hys hyppys⁷ and in
cele!⁸

¹plague take it ²soft ³empty ⁴living ⁵smelled
⁶snatches ⁷hips ⁸happyness

Bot who was his gossyppys ¹ so sone rede?

MAK. So fare fall thare lyppys!

I. PASTOR. [*Aside.*] Hark now, a le! ²

560

MAK. So God thaym thank,
Parkyn, and Gybon Waller, I say,
And gentill Iohn Horne, in good fay,
He made all the garray,³

With the greatt shank.

II. PASTOR. Mak, freyndys will we be, ffor we ar all
oone.

MAK. We! now I hald for me, for mendys ⁴ gett I none.
Fare-well all thre! All glad were ye gone!

[*Exeunt the shepherds.*]

III. PASTOR. Fare wordys may ther be, bot luf is ther
none

This yere.

570

I. PASTOR. Gaf ye the chyld any-thing?

II. PASTOR. I trow, not oone farthyng!

III. PASTOR. Fast agane will I flyng;

Abyde ye me there.

[*The Third Shepherd returns.*]

Mak, take it to no grefe, if I com to thi barne.

MAK. Nay, thou dos me greatt reprefe, and fowll has
thou farne.

III. PASTOR. The child will it not grefe, that lytyll day-
starne.⁵

Mak, with youre leyfe, let me gyf youre barne

Bot sex pence.

MAK. Nay, do way! He slepys.

III. PASTOR. Me thynk he pepys.

580

MAK. When he wakyns he wepys!

I pray you go hence!

¹ god-parents ² lie ³ commotion ⁴ amends ⁵ day-star

III. PASTOR. Gyf me lefe hym to kys, and lyft vp the clowtt.¹

[*Lifts the cloth, thinks the baby deformed.*]

What the dewill is this? he has a long snowte!

[*The other shepherds, pressing forward, look at the baby.*]

I. PASTOR. He is merkyd amys.² We wate ill abowte.

II. PASTOR. Ill spon weft, iwys, ay commys foull owte.³

[*Suddenly, realizing that it is a sheep.*]

Ay, so!

He is lyke to oure shepe!

III. PASTOR. How, Gyb! may I pepe? 590

I. PASTOR. I trow, kynde will crepe

Where it may not go!⁴

[*They lift the sheep out of the cradle.*]

II. PASTOR. This was a gwantt gawde, and a far cast!
It was a hee frawde!⁵

III. PASTOR. Yee, syrs, wast.⁶

Lett bren⁷ this bawde, and bynd hir fast.

A! fals skawde,⁸ hang at the last!

So shall thou.

Wyll ye se how thay swedyll

His foure feytt in the medyll?

Sagh I neuer in a credyll 600

A hornyd lad or now!

MAK. Peasse byd I! What! Lett be youre fare!

I am he that hym gatt, and yond woman hym bare.

¹ cloth ² deformed ³ an old proverb: "From an ill-spun woof ever comes foul out" ⁴ an old proverb: "Nature will walk where it may not go" ⁵ great fraud ⁶ was it ⁷ burn ⁸ scold

I. PASTOR. What dewill shall he hatt? ¹

“Mak?” Lo, God, Makys ayre!

II. PASTOR. Lett be all that. Now God gyf hym care,
I sagh.

Vxor. A pratty childe is he
As syttys on a womans kne;
A dyllydowne, perde,
To gar a man laghe.

610

III. PASTOR. I know hym by the ecremarke; that is a
good tokyn!

MAK. I tell you, syrs, hark! hys noyse ² was brokyn;
Sythen ³ told me a clerk that he was forspokyn. ⁴

I. PASTOR. This is a fals wark; I wold fayn be
workyn. ⁵
Gett wepyn!

Vxor. He was takyn with an elfe,
I saw it myself;
When the klok stroke twelf
Was he forshapyn. ⁶

II. PASTOR. Ye two ar well feft ⁷ sam in a stede. 620

III. PASTOR. Syn thay manteyn thare theft, let do
thaym to dede.

MAK. If I trespas eft, gyrd of my heede!
With you will I be left.

I. PASTOR. Syrs, do my reede:

For this trespas
We will nawther ban ne flyte, ⁸
Fyght nor chyte, ⁹
Bot haue done as tyte, ¹⁰
And cast hym in canvas.

¹ be named ² nose ³ afterwards ⁴ bewitched ⁵ avenged
⁶ deformed ⁷ endowed ⁸ curse nor quarrel ⁹ chide ¹⁰ quickly

[*They toss Mak in a sheet, and then return to the fields.*]

I. PASTOR. Lord, what! I am sore in poynt for to
bryst.

In fayth, I may no more; therfor wyll I ryst. 630

II. PASTOR. As a shepe of sevyn skore he weyd in my
fyst.

For to slepe ay-whore¹ me thynk that I lyst.

III. PASTOR. Now I pray you,

Lyg downe on this grene.

I. PASTOR. On these thefys yit I mene.

III. PASTOR. Wherto shuld ye tene?²

Do as I say you!

[*They lie down and fall asleep.*]

An angel sings "Gloria in excelsis"; then let him say:

ANGELUS. Ryse, hyrd-men heynd!³ for now is he borne

'That shall take fro the feynd that Adam had lorne:

'That warloo⁴ to sheynd⁵ this nyght is he borne; 640

God is made youre freynd now at this morne.

He behestys

At Bedlem go se,

Ther lygys that fre⁶

In a cryb full poorely

Betwyx two bestys.

[*The angel withdraws.*]

I. PASTOR. This was a qwant stevyn⁷ that euer yit I
hard.

It is a meruell to neuyn,⁸ thus to be skard.

II. PASTOR. Of Godys son of heuyn he spak vpward.

All the wod on a leuyn⁹ me thoght that he gard¹⁰ 650

Appere.

¹ anywhere ² trouble ³ gracious ⁴ devil ⁵ destroy ⁶ noble
being ⁷ voice ⁸ relate ⁹ lightning ¹⁰ made

III. PASTOR. He spake of a barne
In Bedlem, I you warne.

I. PASTOR. That betokyns yond starne;¹
Let vs seke hym there.

II. PASTOR. Say, what was his song? Hard ye not how
he crakyd it,
Thre brefes to a long?

III. PASTOR. Yee, mary, he hakt² it;
Was no crochett wrong, nor no-thing that lakt it.

I. PASTOR. For to syng vs emong, right as he knakt² it,
I can. 660

II. PASTOR. Let se how ye croyne.
Can ye bark at the mone?

III. PASTOR. Hold youre tonges! Haue done!

I. PASTOR. Hark after, than!

II. PASTOR. To Bedlem he bad that we shuld gang;
I am full fard³ that we tary to lang.

III. PASTOR. Be mery and not sad; of myrth is oure
sang;

Euer-lastyng glad to mede⁴ may we fang,⁵
Withoutt noyse.

I. PASTOR. Hy we theder for-thy,⁶ 670
If we be wete and wery,
To that chyld and that lady!
We haue it not to lose.

II. PASTOR. We fynde by the prophecy—let be youre
dyn!—

Of Daud and Isay and mo then I myn,⁷
Thay prophecyed by clergy that in a vyrgyn
Shuld he lyght and ly, to slokyn⁸ oure syn

¹ star ² sang ³ afraid ⁴ reward ⁵ go ⁶ therefore
⁷ remember ⁸ quench

And slake it,
 Oure kynde from wo.
 For Isay sayd so: 680
Ecce virgo
Concipiet a chylde that is nakyd.

III. PASTOR. Full glad may we be, and abyde that day
 That luffy to see, that all myghtys may.
 Lord, well were me, for ones and for ay,
 Myght I knele on my kne som word for to say
 To that chylde.
 Bot the angell sayd,
 In a cryb wos he layde;
 He was poorly arayd, 690
 Both meke and mylde.

I. PASTOR. Patryarkes that has bene, and prophetys
 beforene,
 Thay desyryd to haue sene this chylde that is borne.
 Thay ar gone full clene; that haue thay lorne.¹
 We shall se hym, I weyn, or it be morne,
 To tokyn.
 When I se hym and fele,
 Then wote I full weyll
 It is true as steyll
 That prophetys haue spokyn: 700

To so poore as we ar that he wold appere,
 Fyrst fynd, and declare by his messyngere.

II. PASTOR. Go we now, let vs fare; the place is vs
 nere.

III. PASTOR. I am redy and yare;² go we in-fere³
 To that bright.

Lord, if thi wyll it be—

¹ lost ² prepared ³ together

We ar lewde ¹ all thre—

Thou grauntt vs somkyns gle ²

To comforth thi wight.

[*They enter the stable. The First Shepherd kneels before the babe.*]

I. PASTOR. Hayll, comly and clene! hayll, yong
child! 710

Hayll, Maker, as I meyne! of a madyn so mylde!

Thou has waryd,³ I weyne, the warlo so wylde;

The fals gyler of teyn,⁴ now goys he begylde.

Lo, he merys!

Lo, he laghys, my swetyng!

A welfare metyng!

I haue holden my hetyng.⁵

Haue a bob of cherys!

[*The Second Shepherd kneels.*]

II. PASTOR. Hayll, sufferan Sauyoure, ffor thou has vs
soght!

Hayll, frely foyde ⁶ and floure, that all thyng has
wrought! 720

Hayll, full of fauoure, that made all of noght!

Hayll! I kneyll and I cowre. A byrd haue I broght

To my barne.

Hayll, lytyll tyne ⁷ mop!⁸

Of oure crede thou art crop.

I wold drynk on thy cop,⁹

Lytyll day-starne!

[*The Third Shepherd kneels.*]

III. PASTOR. Hayll, derlyng dere, full of godhede!

I pray the be nere when that I haue nede.

¹ unlettered ² joy of some kind ³ cursed ⁴ injury ⁵ prom-
ise ⁶ noble child ⁷ tiny ⁸ baby ⁹ Sacramental cup

Hayll! swete is thy chere! My hart wold blede 730
To se the sytt here in so poore wede,¹

With no pennys.

Hayll! put furth thy dall!²

I bryng the bot a ball:

Haue and play the with-all,

And go to the tenys.

MARIA. The Fader of heuen, God omnypotent,

That sett all on seuen,³ his Son has he sent.

My name couth he neuen and lyght⁴ or he went.

I conceyuyd hym full euen, through myght as he
ment; 740

And now he is borne.

He kepe you fro wo!

I shall pray hym so.

Tell, furth as ye go,

And myn on this morne.

I. PASTOR. Farewell, lady, so fare to beholde,
With thy childe on thi kne!

II. PASTOR. Bot he lygys full cold.
Lord, well is me! Now we go, thou behold.

III. PASTOR. For sothe, all redy it semys to be told
Full oft. 750

I. PASTOR. What grace we haue fun!⁵

II. PASTOR. Com furth; now ar we won!⁶

III. PASTOR. To syng ar we bun:⁷

Let take on loft!

[*They go out singing.*]

Explicit pagina Pastorum.

¹ garment ² fist ³ that made all things ⁴ alighted (an
allusion to the Incarnation) ⁵ found ⁶ saved ⁷ bound

THE SQUYR OF LOWE DEGRE

It was a squyer of lowe degre
 That loved the kings doughter of Hungre.
 The squir was curteous and hend,¹
 Ech man him loved and was his frend;
 He served the kyng her father dere,
 Fully the tyme of seven yere;
 For he was marshall of his hall,
 And set the lords both great and smal.
 An hardy man he was, and wight,
 Both in batayle and in fyght; 10
 But ever he was styll mornyng,
 And no man wyste² for what thyng;
 And all was for that fayre lady,
 The kynges doughter of Hungry.
 There wyste no wyghte in Christente
 Howe well he loved that lady fre;
 He loved her more then seven yere,
 Yet was of love never the nere.
 He was not ryche of golde and fe,³
 A gentyll man forsoth was he. 20
 To no man durst he make his mone,
 But syghed sore hymselfe alone.
 And evermore, whan he was wo,
 Into his chambre would he goo;
 And through the chambre he toke the waye,
 Into the gardyn, that was full gaye;
 And in the garden, as I wene,
 Was an arber fayre and grene,
 And in the arber was a tre,
 A fayrer in the world might none be; 30
 The tre it was of cypresse,

¹ gracious ² knew ³ property

The fyrst tre that Jesus chese; ¹
 The sother-wood ² and sykamoure,
 The reed rose and the lyly-floure,
 The boxe, the beche, and the larel-tre,
 The date, also the damyse, ³
 The fylbyrdes hangyng to the ground,
 The fygge-tre, and the maple round,
 And other trees there was mane ane,
 The pyany, ⁴ the popler, and the plane, 40
 With brode braunches all aboute,
 Within the arbar, and eke withoute;
 On every braunche sate byrdes thre,
 Syngyng with great melody,
 The latorocke ⁵ and the nightyngale,
 The ruddocke ⁶ and the woodewale, ⁷
 The pee ⁸ and the popinjaye, ⁹
 The thrustele sange both nyght and daye,
 The marlyn, ¹⁰ and the wrenne also,
 The swalowe whippyng to and fro, 50
 The jaye jangled them amonge,
 The larke began that mery songe,
 The sparowe spredde her on her spraye,
 The mavys songe with notes full gaye,
 The nuthake ¹¹ with her notes newe,
 The sterlynge set her notes full trewe,
 The goldefynche made full mery chere,
 Whan she was bente upon a brere,
 And many other foules mo,
 The osyll, ¹² and the thrusshe also; 60
 And they sange wyth notes clere,
 In confortyng that squyere.
 And evermore, whan he was wo,
 Into that arber wolde he go,

¹ chose ² southernwood ³ damson ⁴ peony ⁵ lark ⁶ robin
⁷ woodlark ⁸ wryneck ⁹ parrot ¹⁰ merlin ¹¹ nuthatch
¹² ouzel

And under a bente he layde hym lowe,
 Ryght even under her chambre wyndowe;
 And lened his backe to a thorne,
 And sayd, 'Alas, that I was borne!
 That I were ryche of golde and fe,
 That I might wedde that lady fre! 70
 Of golde good, or some treasure,
 That I myght wedde that lady floure!
 Or elles come of so gentyll kynne,
 The ladyes love that I myght wyne.
 Wolde God that I were a kynges sonne,
 That ladyes love that I myght wonne!
 Or els so bolde in eche fyght,
 As Syr Lybius that gentell knyght,
 Or els so bolde in chyvalry,
 As Syr Gawayne, or Syr Guy; 80
 Or els so doughty of my hande
 As was the gyaunte Syr Colbrande,
 And it were put in jeopede ¹
 What man shoulde wyne that lady fre,
 Than should no man have her but I,
 The Kynges doughter of Hungry.'
 But ever he sayde, 'Wayle a waye!
 For poverte passeth all my paye!
 And as he made thys rufull chere,
 He sowned ² downe in that arbere. 90

That lady herde his mournyng all,
 Ryght under the chambre wall;
 In her oryall there she was
 Closed well with royall glas;
 Fulfilled it was with ymagery,
 Every wyndowe by and by,³
 On eche syde had there a gynne,⁴
 Sperde with many a dyvers pynne.

¹ to the test² swooned³ side by side⁴ fastening

Anone that lady, fayre and fre,
Undyd a pynne of yvere, 100
And wyd the windowes she open set,
The sunne shone in at her closet,
In that arber fayre and gaye,
She sawe where that squyre lay.

The lady sayd to hym anone,
'Syr, why makest thou that mone?
And whi thou mournest night and day
Now tell me, squyre, I thee pray;
And, as I am a true lady,
Thy counsayl shall I never dyscry; 110
And, yf it be no reprefe ¹ to thee,
Thy bote ² of bale yet shall I be.'
And often was he in wele and wo,
But never so well as he was tho.

The squyer set hym on hys kne,
And sayde, 'Lady, it is for thee,
I have loved this seven yere,
And bought thy love, lady, full dere.
Ye are so ryche in youre aray
That one word to you I dare not say, 120
And come ye be of so hye kynne,
No worde of love durst I begynne.
My wyll to you yf I had sayde,
And ye therwith not well apayde,³
Ye might have bewraied me to the kinge,
And brought me sone to my endynge.
Therefore, my lady fayre and fre,
I durst not shewe my harte to thee;
But I am here at your wyll,
Whether ye wyll me save or spyll;⁴ 130
For all the care I have in be,
A worde of you might comfort me;

¹ reproach ² reward ³ pleased ⁴ destroy

And, yf ye wyll not do so,
 Out of this land I must nedes go;
 I wyll forsake both lande and lede,¹
 And become an hermyte in uncouth stede;
 In many a lande to begge my bred,
 To seke where Christ was quicke and dead;
 A staffe I wyll make me of my spere,
 Lynen cloth I shall none were; 140
 Ever in travayle I shall wende,
 Tyll I come to the worldes ende;
 And, lady, but thou be my bote,
 There shall no sho come on my fote;
 Therefore, lady, I the praye,
 For hym that dyed on Good Frydaye,
 Let me not in daunger dwell,
 For his love that harowed hell.'

Than sayd that lady milde of mode,
 Ryght in her closet there she stode, 150
 'By hym that dyed on a tre,
 Thou shalt never be deceyved for me;
 Though I for thee should be slayne,
 Squyer, I shall the love agayne.
 Go forth, and serve my father the kynge,
 And let be all thy styll mournynge;
 Let no man wete ² that ye were here,
 Thus all alone in my arbere;
 If ever ye wyll come to your wyll,
 Here and se, and holde you styll. 160
 Beware of the stewarde, I you praye,
 He wyll deceyve you and he maye;
 For, if he wote of your woyng,
 He wyl bewraye you to the kynge;
 Anone for me ye shall be take,
 And put in pryson for my sake;

¹ people ² know

Than must ye nedes abyde the lawe,
 Peraventure both hanged and drawe.
 That syght of you I would not se,
 For all the golde in Christente. 170
 For, and ye my love should wynne,
 With chyvalry ye must begynne,
 And other dedes of armes to done,
 Through whiche ye may wynne your shone;¹
 And ryde through many a peryllous place,
 As a venterous man to seke your grace,
 Over hylles and dales, and hye mountaines,
 In wethers wete, both hayle and raynes,
 And yf ye may no harbroughe se,
 Than must ye lodge under a tre, 180
 Among the beastes wyld and tame,
 And ever you wyll gette your name;
 And in your armure must ye lye,
 Every nyght than by and by,
 And your meny² everychone,
 Till seven yere be comen and gone;
 And passe by many a peryllous see,
 Squyer, for the love of me,
 Where any war begynneth to wake,
 And many a batayll undertake, 190
 Throughout the land of Lumbardy,
 In every cytie by and by.
 And be avised, when thou shalt fight,
 Loke that ye stand aye in the right;
 And, yf ye wyll take good hede,
 Yet all the better shall ye spede;

.....

I pray to God and Our Lady,
 Sende you the whele of vyctory,

¹ shoes ² followers

That my father so fayne ¹ may be,
 That he wyll wede me unto thee, 200
 And make the king of this countre,
 To have and holde in honeste,
 Wyth welth and wyne ² to were the crowne,
 And to be lorde of toure and towne;
 That we might our dayes endure
 In parfyte love that is so pure;
 And if we may not so come to,
 Other wyse then must we do;
 And therfore, squyer, wende thy way,
 And hye the fast on thy journey, 210
 And take thy leve of kinge and quene,
 And so to all the courte bydene.³
 Ye shall not want at your goyng
 Golde, nor sylver, nor other thyng.
 This seven yere I shall you abyde,
 Betyde of you what so betyde;
 Tyll seven yere be comen and gone
 I shall be mayde all alone.
 The squyer kneled on his kne,
 And thanked that lady fayre and fre; 220
 And thryes he kyssed that lady tho,
 And toke his leve, and forth gan go.

The kinges steward stode full nye,
 In a chambre fast them bye,
 And hearde theyr wordes wonder wele,
 And all the woyng every dele.
 He made a vowe to heaven kynge,
 For to bewraye that swete thyng,
 And that squyer taken shoulde be,
 And hanged hye on a tre; 230
 And that false stewarde full of yre,
 Them to betraye was his desyre;

¹ glad ² joy ³ quickly

He bethought hym nedely,
Every daye by and by,
How he myght venged be
On that lady fayre and fre,
For he her loved pryvely,
And therfore dyd her great envye.¹
Alas! it tourned to wrother-heyle ²
That ever he wyste of theyr counsayle.

240

But leve we of the stewarde here,
And speke we more of that squyer,
Howe he to his chambre wente,
Whan he paste from that lady gente.
There he araied him in scarlet reed,
And set his chaplet upon his head,
A belte about his sydes two,
With brode barres to and fro;
A horne about his necke he caste,
And forth he went than at the last
To do hys office in the hall
Among the lordes both great and small.
He toke a white yeard ³ in his hande,
Before the kynge than gane he stande,
And sone he sate hym on his knee,
And served the kynge ryght royally,
With deynty meates that were dere,
With partryche, pecoke, and plovere,
With byrdes in bread ybake,
The tele, the ducke, and the drake,
The cocke, the curlewe, and the crane,
With fesauntes fayre, theyr were no wane,⁴
Both storkes and snytes ⁵ ther were also,
And venyson freshe of bucke and do,
And other deyntes many one,
For to set afore the kynge anone:

250

260

¹ harm ² calamity ³ staff ⁴ lack ⁵ snipes

And when the squyer had done so,
 He served the hall bothe to and fro.
 Eche man hym loved in honeste,
 Hye and lowe in theyr degre, 270
 So dyd the kyng full sodenly,
 And he wyst not wherfore nor why.
 The kyng behelde the squyer wele,
 And all his rayment every dele,
 He thoughte he was the semylyest man
 That ever in the worlde he sawe or than.
 Thus sate the kyng and eate ryght nought,
 But on his squyer was all his thought.

Anone the stewarde toke good hede,
 And to the kyng full soone he yede,¹ 280
 And soone he tolde unto the kyng
 All theyr wordes and theyr woyng;
 And how she hyght² hym lande and fe,
 Golde and sylver great plentye,
 And how he should his leve take,
 And become a knight for her sake:
 'And thus they talked bothe in-fere,³
 And I drewe me nere and nere,
 Had I not come in, verayly,
 The squyer had layne her by, 290
 But whan he was ware of me,
 Full fast away can he fle;
 That is sothe: here is my hand
 To fight with him while I may stand.'

The kyng sayd to the steward tho,
 'I may not beleve it should be so;
 Hath he be so bonayre⁴ and benyngne,
 And served me syth he was yinge,
 And redy with me in every nede,
 Bothe true of word, and eke of dede, 300

¹ went ² promised ³ together ⁴ well-bred

I may not beleve, be nyght nor daye,
My doughter dere he wyll betraye,
Nor to come her chambre nye,
That fode¹ to longe with no foly;
Though she would to hym consente,
That lovely lady fayre and gente,
I truste hym so well withouten drede,
That he would never do that dede;
But yf he myght that lady wynne,
In wedlocke to welde withouten synne, 310
And yf she wyll assent him tyll,
The squyer is worthy to have none yll.
For I have sene that many a page
Have become men by mariage;
Than it is semely that squyer
To have my doughter by this manere,
And eche man in his degre
Become a lorde of ryaltye,
By fortune and by other grace,
By herytage and by purchase: 320
Therfore, stewarde, beware hereby,
Defame hym not for no envy:
It were great reuth he should be spylte,
Or put to death withouten gylte;
And more ruthe of my doughter dere,
For chaungyng of that ladyes chere;
I woulde not for my crowne so newe,
That lady chaunge hyde or hewe;
Or for to put thyselfe in drede,
But thou myght take hym with the dede. 330
For yf it may be founde in thee
That thou them fame for enmyte,
Thou shalt be taken as a felon,
And put full depe in my pryson,

¹ child

And fetered fast unto a stone,
 Tyl .xii. yere were come and gone,
 And drawen wyth hors throughe the cyte,
 And soone hanged upon a tre;
 And thou may not thy selfe excuse,
 This dede thou shalt no wise refuse; 340
 And therfore, steward, take good hed,
 How thou wilt answeere to this ded.'
 The stewarde answered with great envy,
 'That I have sayd, I wyll stand therby;
 To suffre death and endlesse wo,
 Syr kynge, I wyl never go therfro;
 For, yf that ye wyll graunt me here
 Strength of men and great power,
 I shall hym take this same nyght,
 In chambre with your doughter bright; 350
 For I shall never be gladd of chere,
 Tyll I be venged of that squyer.'

Than sayd the kynge full curteysly
 Unto the stewarde, that stode hym by,
 'Thou shalte have strength ynough with the,
 Men of armes .xxx. and thre,
 To watche that lady muche of pryce,
 And her to kepe fro her enemyes.
 For there is no knight in Chrystente,
 That wolde betray that lady fre, 360
 But he should dye under his shelde
 And I myght se hym in the feldde;
 And therfore, stewarde, I the pray,
 Take hede what I shall to the say;
 And if the squiere come to-night,
 For to speke with that lady bryght,
 Let hym say whatsoever he wyll,
 And here and se and holde you styll;
 And herken well what he wyll say,

Or thou with him make any fray 370
 So he come not her chambre win,¹
 No bate ² on hym loke thou begyn,
 Though that he kysse that lady fre,
 And take his leave ryght curteysly,
 Let hym go, both hole and sounde,
 Without wemme ³ or any wounde;
 But yf he wyl her chamber breke,
 No worde to hym that thou do speke.
 But yf he come with company,
 For to betraye that fayre lady, 380
 Loke he be taken soone anone,
 And all his meyne everychone,
 And brought with strength to my pryson,
 As traytour, thefe, and false felon;
 And yf he make any defence,
 Loke that he never go thence;
 But loke thou hew hym al so small,
 As flesshe whan it to the potte shall.
 And yf he yelde hym to thee,
 Brynge him both saufe and sounde to me. 390
 I shall borowe,⁴ for seven yere
 He shall not wedde my doughter dere:
 And therefore, stewarde, I thee praye,
 Thou watche that lady nyght and daye.
 The stewarde sayde the kynge untyll,
 'All your bidding I shall fulfyll.'
 The stewarde toke his leave to go,
 The squyer came fro chambre tho:
 Downe he went into the hall,
 The officers sone can he call, 400
 Both ussher, panter,⁵ and butler,
 And other that in office were;

¹ within ² strife ³ hurt ⁴ pledge ⁵ pantler, servant in
 charge of the pantry

There he them warned sone anone
 To take up the bordes everychone.
 Than they dyd his commaundement,
 And sythe ¹ unto the kyng he went;
 Full lowe he set hym on his kne,
 And voyded ² his borde full gentely;
 And whan the squyre had done so,
 Anone he sayde the kyng unto, 410
 'As ye are lorde of chyvalry,
 Geve me leve to passe the sea,
 To prove my strenthe with my ryght hande,
 On Godes enemyes in uncouth land;
 And to be knowe in chyvalry,
 In Gascoyne, Spayne, and Lumbardy;
 In eche batayle for to fyght,
 To be proved a venterous knyght.'
 The kyng sayd to the squyer tho,
 'Thou shalt have good leve to go; 420
 I shall the gyve both golde and fe,
 And strength of men to wende with thee;
 If thou be true in worde and dede,
 I shall thee helpe in all thy nede.'
 The squyer thanked the kyng anone,
 And toke his leve and forth can gone,
 With joye, and blysse, and mucche pryde,
 With all his meyny by his syde.
 He had not ryden but a whyle,
 Not the mountenaunce of a myle, 430
 Or he was ware of a vyllage,
 Anone he sayde unto a page,
 'Our souper soone loke it be dyght,³
 Here wyll we lodge all to-nyght.'
 They toke theyr ynnes ⁴ in good intende,
 And to theyr supper soone they wente.

¹ afterwards ² cleared ³ prepared ⁴ lodgings

Whan he was set, and served at meate,
Than he sayd he had forgete
To take leve of that lady fre,
The kynges doughter of Hungre. 440

Anone the squyer made him yare,¹
And by hymselfe forth can he fare;
Without strength of his meyne,
Unto the castell than went he.
Whan he came to the posterne gate,
Anone he entred in thereat,
And his drawen swerd in his hande,
There was no more with him wolde stande:
But it stode with hym full harde,
As ye shall here nowe of the stewarde. 450

He wende ² in the worlde none had be
That had knowen of his pryvite;
Alas! it was not as he wende,
For all his counsayle the stewarde kende.³
He had bewrayed him to the kyng
Of all his love and his woynge;
And yet he laye her chambre by,
Armed with a great company,
And beset it one eche syde,
For treason walketh wonde wyde. 460

The squyer thought on no mystruste,
He wende no man in the worlde had wyste;
But yf he had knowen, by Saynt John,
He had not come theder by his owne;
Or yf that lady had knowen his wyll,
That he should have come her chamber tyll,
She would have taken hym golde and fe,
Strength of men and royalte;
But there ne wyst no man nor grome

¹ ready ² thought ³ knew

Where that squyer was become; 470
 But forth he went hymselfe alone
 Amonge his servauntes everychone.
 Whan that he came her chambre to,
 Anone he sayde, 'Your dore undo!
 Undo,' he sayde, 'nowe, fayre lady!
 I am beset with many a spy.
 Lady, as whyte as whales bone,
 There are thyrtty agaynst me one.
 Undo thy dore! my worthy wyfe,
 I am besette with many a knyfe. 480
 Undo your dore! my lady swete,
 I am beset with enemyes great;
 And, lady, but ye wyll aryse,
 I shall be dead with myne enemyes.
 Undo thy dore! my frely¹ floure,
 For ye are myne, and I am your.'

That lady with those wordes awoke,
 A mantell of golde to her she toke;
 She sayde, 'Go away, thou wicked wyght,
 Thou shalt not come here this nyght; 490
 For I wyll not my dore undo
 For no man that cometh therto.
 There is but one in Christente
 That ever made that forwarde² with me;
 There is but one that ever bare lyfe,
 That ever I hight to be his wyfe;
 He shall me wedde, by Mary bryght,
 Whan he is proved a venterous knyght;
 For we have loved this seven yere,
 There was never love to me so dere. 500
 There lyeth-on³ me both kyng and knyght,
 Dukes, erles, of muche might.
 Wende forth, squyer, on your waye,

¹ lovely ² agreement ³ urge

For here ye gette none other paye;
 For I ne wote what ye should be,
 That thus besecheth love of me.'

'I am your owne squyr,' he sayde,
 'For me, lady, be not dismayde.

Come I am full pryvely

To take my leave of you, lady.'

510

'Welcome,' she sayd, 'my love so dere,

Myne owne dere heart and my squyer;

I shall you geve kysses thre,

A thousande pounce unto your fe,

And kepe I shall my maydenhode ryght,

Tyll ye be proved a venturous knyght,

For yf ye should me wede anone,

My father wolde make sleepe you soone.

I am the kynges doughter of Hungre,

And ye alone that have loved me,

520

And though you love me never so sore,

For me ye shall never be lore.¹

Go forth, and aske me at my kynne,

And loke what graunt you may wyne;

Yf that ye gette graunte in faye,²

My selfe therto shall not say nay;

And yf ye may not do so,

Otherwyse ye shall come to.

Ye are bothe hardy, stronge, and wight,

Go forth and be a venterous knight.

530

I pray to God and our Lady,

To send you the whele of victory,

That my father so leve³ he be,

That he wyll profer me to thee.

I wote well it is lyghtly sayd,

"Go forth, and be nothyng afrayde."

A man of worshyp may not do so,

¹ lost ² faith ³ dear

He must have what neds him unto;
 He must have gold, he must have fe,
 Strength of men and royalte. 540
 Golde and sylver spare ye nought,
 Tyll to manhode ye be brought;
 To what batayll soever ye go,
 Ye shall have an hundreth pounce or two;
 And yet to me, syr, ye may saye,
 That I woulde fayne have you awaye,
 That profered you golde and fe,
 Out of myne eye syght for to be.
 Neverthelesse it is not so,
 It is for the worshyp of us two. 550
 Though you be come of symple kynne,
 Thus my love, syr, may ye wyne,
 Yf ye have grace of victory.'

.....

Ryght as they talked thus in-fere,
 Theyr enemyes approached nere and nere,
 Foure and thyrty armed bryght
 The steward had arayed hym to fyght.
 The steward was ordeyned to spy,
 And for to take him utterly.
 He wende to death he should have gone, 560
 He felled seven men agaynst hym one;
 Whan he had them to grounde brought,
 The stewarde at hym full sadly¹ fought,
 So harde they smote together tho,
 The stewardest throte he cut in two,
 And sone he fell downe to the grounde,
 As a traitour untrew with many a wound.
 The squyer sone in armes they hente,²
 And of they dyd his good garmente,

¹ boldly ² seized

And on the stewarde they it dyd,
And sone his body therin they hydde,
And with their swordes his face they share,
That she should not know what he ware;
They cast hym at her chambre dore,
The stewarde that was styffe and store,¹
Whan they had made that great affraye,
Full pryvely they stale awaye;
In armes they take that squyer tho,
And to the kynges chambre can they go,
Without wemme or any wounde,
Before the kyng bothe hole and sounde.
As soone as the kyng him spyed with eye,
He sayd, 'Welcome, sonne, sykerly!
Thou hast cast thee my sonne to be,
This seven yere I shall let ² thee.'

570

580

Leve we here of this squyer wight,
And speake we of that lady bryght,
How she rose, that lady dere,
To take her leve of that squyer.
Also [fresh] as she was borne,
She stod her chambre dore beforne.
'Alas,' she sayd, 'and weale away!
For all to long now have I lay';
She sayd, 'Alas, and all for wo!
Withouten men why came ye so?
Yf that ye wolde have come to me,
Other werninges there might have be.
Now all to dere my love is bought,
But it shall never be lost for nought';
And in her armes she toke hym there,
Into the chamber she dyd hym bere;
His bowels soone she dyd out drawe,
And buryed them in Goddes lawe.

590

600

She sered ¹ that body with specery,²
 With wyrgin ³ waxe and commendry;⁴
 And closed hym in a maser ⁵ tre,
 And set on hym lockes thre.
 She put him in a marble stone,
 With quaynt gynnes many one;
 And set hym at hir beddes head,
 And every day she kyst that dead.
 Soone at morne, whan she uprose,
 Unto that dead body she gose,
 There wold she knele downe on her kne,
 And make her prayer to the Trynite,
 And kysse that body twyse or thryse,
 And fall in a swowne or she myght ryse.
 Whan she had so done,

610

To chyrche than wolde she gone,
 Than would she here masses fyve,
 And offre to them whyle she myght lyve:
 'There shall none knowe but heven kyng
 For whome that I make myne offrynge.'

620

The kyng her father anone he sayde:
 'My doughter, wy are you dysmayde?
 So feare a lady as ye are one,
 And so semely of fleshe and bone,—
 Ye were whyte as whales bone,
 Nowe are ye pale as any stone;
 Your ruddy read as any chery,
 With browes bent and eyes full mery;
 Ye were wont to harpe and syng,
 And be the meriest in chambre comyng;
 Ye ware both golde and good velvet,
 Clothe of damaske with saphyres set;
 Ye ware the pery ⁶ on your head,
 With stones full oryent, whyte and read;

630

¹ wrapped ² spicery ³ pure ⁴ cumin, an aromatic plant?
⁵ maple ⁶ gems

Ye ware coronalles of golde,
 With diamoundes set many a foulde;
 And nowe ye were clothes of blacke, 640
 Tell me, doughter, for whose sake?
 If he be so poore of fame,
 That ye may not be wedded for shame,
 Brynge him to me anone ryght,
 I shall hym make squyer and knight;
 And, yf he be so great a lorde,
 That your love may not accorde,
 Let me, doughter, that lordynge se;
 He shall have golde ynoughe with thee.
 'Gramercy, father, so mote I thryve, 650
 For I mourne for no man alyve.
 Ther is no man, by heven kyng,
 That shal knowe more of my mournynge.'

Her father knewe it every deale,
 But he kept it in counsele:
 'To-morowe ye shall on hunting fare,
 And ryde, my doughter, in a chare,¹
 It shalbe covered with velvet reede,
 And clothes of fyne golde al about your hed,
 With damaske, white and asure blewe, 660
 Wel dyapred² with lyllyes newe;
 Your pomelles³ shalbe ended with gold,
 Your chaynes enameled many a folde;
 Your mantel of ryche degre,
 Purpyl palle⁴ and armyne fre;
 Jennettes⁵ of Spayne, that ben so wyght,
 Trapped to the ground with velvet bright;
 Ye shall have harpe, sautry,⁶ and songe,
 And other myrthes you amonge;
 Ye shall have rumney and malmesyne, 670
 Both ypocrasse and vernage wyne,

¹ chariot² adorned³ knobs⁴ fine cloth⁵ small horses⁶ psaltery

Mountrose and wyne of Greke,
 Both algrade and respice eke,
 Antioche and bastarde,
 Pyment also and garnarde;
 Wyne of Greke and muscadell,
 Both clare, pyment, and rochell.
 The reed your stomake to defye,
 And pottes of osey set you by.
 You shall have venison ybake, 680
 The best wyld foule that may be take.
 A lese ¹ of grehound with you to strike,
 And hert and hynde and other lyke.
 Ye shalbe set at such a tryst
 That herte and hynde shall come to your fyst,
 Your dysease ² to dryve you fro,
 To here the bugles there yblow,
 With theyr begles ³ in that place,
 And sevenscore braches ³ at his rechase.⁴
 Homward thus shall ye ryde, 690
 On haukyng by the ryvers syde,
 With goshauke and with gentyll fawcon,
 With egle horne and merlyon.⁵
 Whan you come home, your men amonge,
 Ye shall have revell, daunces, and songe;
 Lytle chyl dren, great and smale,
 Shall syng, as doth the nyghtyngale.
 Than shall ye go to your evensong,
 With tenours and trebles among;
 Threscore of copes, of damaske bryght, 700
 Full of perles they shalbe pyght; ⁶
 Your aulter clothes of taffata,
 And your sicles ⁷ all of taffetra.⁸
 Your sensours ⁹ shalbe of golde,

¹ leash ² sorrow ³ beagles, braches (kinds of hounds)
⁵ merlin ⁶ trimmed ⁷ tunics ⁸ taffeta ⁹ censers

⁴ call

Endent with asure many a folde.
 Your quere ¹ nor organ songe shall wante
 With countre note and dyscant,
 The other halfe on orgayns playeng,
 With yonge chyldren full fayre syngyng.
 Than shall ye go to your suppere, 710
 And sytte in tentes in grene arbere,
 With clothes of Aras pyght to the grounde,
 With saphyres set and dyamonde.
 A cloth of golde abought your heade,
 With popinjayes pyght with pery read,
 And offycers all at your wyll,
 All maner delightes to bryng you tyll.
 The nightingale sitting on a thorne
 Shall synge you notes both even and morne.
 An hundreth knightes truly tolde 720
 Shall play with bowles in alayes colde,
 Your disease to drive awaie:
 To se the fisshes in poles ² plaie;
 And then walke in arbere up and downe,
 To se the floures of great renowne:
 To a draw-brydge than shall ye,
 The one halfe of stone, the other of tre;
 A barge shall mete you full ryght
 With .xxiiii. ores full bryght,
 With trompettes and with claryowne, 730
 The fresshe water to rowe up and downe;
 Than shall ye go to the salte fome,
 Your maner ³ to se, or ye come home,
 With .lxxx. shyppes of large towre,
 With dromedaryes ⁴ of great honour,
 And carackes ⁴ with sayles two,
 The swetest that on water may goo,
 With galyes good upon the haven,

¹ choir ² pools ³ manor houses ⁴ large vessels

With .lxxx. ores at the fore staven.¹

Your maryners shall synge arowe ²

740

“Hey how and rumbylawe.”

Than shall ye, doughter, aske the wyne,

With spices that be good and fyne,

Gentyll pottes with genger grene,

With dates and deynties you betwene.

Forty torches brenynge bryght,

At your brydges to brynge you lyght.

Into your chambre they shall you brynge

With muche myrthe and more lykyng.

Your costerdes ³ covered with whyte and blewe, 750

And dyapred with lyles newe.

Your curtaines of camaca ⁴ all in folde,

Your felyoles ⁵ all of golde.

Your tester ⁶ pery at your heed,

Curtaines with popinjays white and reed.

Your hyllynges ⁷ with furies of armyne,

Powdred with golde of hew full fyne.

Your blankettes shall be of fustyane,

Your shetes shall be of clothe of Rayne.

Your head shete shall be of pery pyght,

760

With dyamondes set and rubyes bryght.

Whan you are layde in bedde so softe,

A cage of golde shall hange alofte,

With longe peper ⁸ fayre burnning,

And cloves that be swete smellyng,

Frankensence and olibanum,⁹

That whan ye slepe the taste may come.

And yf ye no rest may take,

All night minstrelles for you shall wake.’

‘Gramercy, father, so mote I the,¹⁰

770

¹ prow ² in a row ³ hangings for a bed ⁴ a fine fabric
⁵ columns ⁶ canopy of a bed ⁷ coverings ⁸ pepper ⁹ fra-
 grant gum ¹⁰ prosper

For all these thinges lyketh not me.[']
Unto her chambre she is gone,
And fell in sownyng sone anone,
With much sorow and sighing sore,
Yet seven yeare she kept hym thore.

But leve we of that lady here,
And speake we more of that squyer,
That in pryson so was take
For the kinges doughters sake.
The kyng hym selfe upon a daye 780
Full pryvely he toke the waye,
Unto the pryson sone he came,
The squyer sone out he name,¹
And anone he made hym swere
His counsayl he should never discure.²
The squyer there helde up his hande,
His byddyng never he should withstande.
The kyng him graunted ther to go
Upon his journey to and fro,
And brefely to passe the sea, 790
That no man weste but he and he,
And whan he had his journay done,
That he wolde come full soone:
'And in my chambre for to be,
The whyles that I do ordayne for thee;
Than shalt thou wedde my doughter dere,
And have my landes both farre and nere.'

The squyer was full mery tho,
And thanked the kyng, and forth gan go.
The kyng hym gave both lande and fe. 800
Anone the squyer passed the se.
In Tuskayne and in Lumbardy,
There he dyd great chyvalry.
In Portyngale nor yet in Spayne,

There myght no man stand hym agayne;
 And where that ever that knyght gan fare,
 The worshyp with hym away he bare:
 And thus he travayled seven yere
 In many a land bothe farre and nere;
 Tyll on a day he thought hym tho 810
 Unto the sepulture for to go;
 And there he made his offerynge soone,
 Right as the kinges doughter bad him don.
 Than he thought hym on a day
 That the kynge to hym dyd saye.
 He toke his leve in Lumbardy,
 And home he came to Hungry.
 Unto the kynge soone he rade,
 As he before his covenauce made,
 And to the kyng he tolde full soone, 820
 Of batayles bolde that he had done,
 And so he did the chyvalry
 That he had sene in Lumbardy.
 To the kynge it was good tydande; ¹
 Anone he toke him by the hande,
 And he made him full royall chere,
 And sayd, 'Welcome, my sonne so dere!
 Let none wete of my meyne
 That out of prison thou shuldest be,
 But in my chamber holde the styll, 830
 And I shall wete my doughters wyll.'

The kynge wente forth hymselfe alone,
 For to here his doughters mone,
 Right under the chambre window.
 That he might her counseyle knowe.
 Had she wyst, that lady fre,
 That her father there had be, -
 He shulde not withouten fayle

¹ tidings

Have knowen so muche of her counsaile
Nor nothing she knew that he was there. 840

Whan she began to carke¹ and care,
Unto that body she sayd tho,
'Alas that we should parte in two!'
Twyse or thryse she kyssed that body,
And fell in sownynge by and by.
'Alas!' than sayd that lady dere,
'I have the kept this seven yere,
And now ye be in powder small,
I may no lenger holde you with all.
My love, to the earth I shall the brynge, 850
And preestes for you to reade and synge.
Yf any man aske me what I have here,
I wyll say it is my treasure.
Yf any man aske why I do so,
"For no theves shall come therto":
And, squyer, for the love of the,
Fy on this worldes vanyte!
Farewell golde pure and fyne;
Farewell velvet and satyne;
Farewell castelles and maners also; 860
Farewell huntynge and hawkyng to;
Farewell revell, myrthe and play;
Farewell pleasure and garmentes gay;
Farewell perle and precyous stone;
Farewell my juielles everychone;
Farewell mantell and scarlet reed;
Farewell crowne unto my heed;
Farewell hawkes and farewell hounde;
Farewell markes and many a pounce;
Farewell huntynge at the hare; 870
Farewell harte and hynde for evermare.
Nowe wyll I take the mantell and the rynge,

¹ sorrow

And become an ancesse¹ in my lyvyng:
 And yet I am a mayden for thee,
 And for all the men in Chrystente.
 To Chryst I shall my prayers make,
 Squyer, onely for thy sake;
 And I shall never no masse heare
 But ye shall have parte in-feare:²
 And every daye whyles I lyve,
 Ye shall have your masses fyve,
 And I shall offre pence thre,
 In tokenyng of the Trynyte.
 And whan this lady had this sayde,
 In sownyng she fel at a brayde.³

880

The whyle she made this great mornynge,
 Under the wall stode har father the kyng.
 'Doughter,' he sayde, 'you must not do so,
 For all those vowes thou must forgo.'

'Alas, father, and wele awaye!

890

Nowe have ye harde what I dyde saye.'

'Doughter, let be all thy mournynge,
 Thou shalt be wedede to a kyng.'

'Iwys,⁴ father, that shall not be

For all the golde in Christente;

Nor all the golde that ever God made

May not my harte glade.'⁵

'My doughter,' he sayde, 'dere derlyng,

I knowe the cause of your mournyng:

Ye wene this body your love should be,

900

It is not so, so mote I the.

It was my stewarde, Syr Maradose,

That ye so longe have kept in close.'

'Alas! father, why dyd ye so?'

'For he wrought you all thys wo.

He made revelation unto me,

¹ nun ² together ³ at once ⁴ certainly ⁵ gladden

That he knewe all your pryvyte;
And howe the squyer, on a day,
Unto your chambre toke the way,
And ther he should have leyen you bi, 910
Had he not come with company;
And howe ye hyght hym golde and fe,
Strengthe of men and royalte;
And than he watched your chambre bryght,
With men of armes hardy and wyght,
For to take that squyer,
That ye have loved this seven yere;
But as the stewarde strong and stout
Beseged your chambre rounde about,
To you your love came full ryght, 920
All alone about mydnight.
And whan he came your dore unto,
And "Lady," he sayde, "undo,"
And soone ye bade hym wende awaye,
For there he gate none other paye:
And as ye talked thus in-fere,
Your enemyes drewe them nere and nere,
They smote to him full soone anone,
There were thyrty agaynst hym one:
But with a baslarde ¹ large and longe 930
The squyer presed in to the thronge;
And so he bare hym in that stounde,
His enemyes gave he many a wounde.
With egre ² mode and herte full throwe,³
The stewardes throte he cut in two;
And than his meyne all in that place
With their swordes they hurte his face,
And than they toke him everichone
And layd him on a marble stone
Before your dore, that ye myght se, 940

¹ dagger ² angry ³ bold

Ryght as your love that he had be.
 And sone the squier there they hent,
 And they dyd of his good garment,
 And did it on the stewarde there,
 That ye wist not what he were:
 Thus ye have kept your enemy here
 Pallyng¹ more than seven yere,
 And as the squyer there was take,
 And done in pryson for your sake;
 Therefore let be your mourning, 950
 Ye shalbe wedded to a kyng,
 Or els unto an emperoure,
 With golde and sylver and great treasure.
 'Do awaye, father, that may not be,
 For all the golde in Chrystente.
 Alas! father,' anone she sayde,
 'Why hath this traytour me betraid?
 Alas!' she sayd, 'I have great wrong
 That I have kept him here so long.
 Alas! father, why dyd ye so? 960
 Ye might have warned me of my fo;
 And ye had tolde me who it had be,
 My love had never be dead for me.'
 Anone she tourned her fro the kyng,
 And downe she fell in dead sownyng.

The kyng anone gan go,
 And hente her in his armes two.
 'Lady,' he sayd, 'be of good chere,
 Your love lyveth and is here;
 And he hath bene in Lombardy, 970
 And done he hath great chyvalry;
 And come agayne he is to me,
 In lyfe and health ye shall him se.
 He shall you wede, my doughter bryght,

¹ languishing

I have hym made squier and knyght;
 He shalbe a lorde of great renowne,
 And after me to were the crowne.'
 'Father,' she sayd, 'if it so be,
 Let me soone that squyer se.'

The squyer forth than dyd he brynge, 980
 Full fayre on lyve and in lykyng.

As sone as she saw him with her eye,
 She fell in sownyng by and by.
 The squyer her hente in armes two,
 And kyssed her an hundreth tymes and mo.
 There was myrth and melody

With harpe, getron, and sautry,
 With rote, ribible, and clokarde,
 With pypes, organs, and bumbarde,
 With other mynstrelles them amonge, 990
 With sytolphe and with sautry songe,
 With fydle, recorde, and dowcemere,
 With trompette and with claryon clere,
 With dulcet pipes of many cordes.

In chambre revelyng all the lordes,
 Unto morne that it was daye,

The kyng to his doughter began to saye,
 'Have here thy love and thy lyking,
 To lyve and ende in Gods blessinge;
 And he that wyll departe ¹ you two, 1000
 God geve him sorow and wo!

A trewer lover than ye are one
 Was never yet of flesh ne bone;
 And but he be as true to thee,
 God let him never thryve ne thee.'

The kyng in herte he was full blithe,
 He kissed his doughter many a sithe,²
 With melody and muche chere;

¹ separate ² time

Anone he called his messengere,
 And commaunded him soone to go 1010
 Through his cities to and fro,
 For to warne his chevalry
 That they should come to Hungry,
 That worthy wedding for to se,
 And come unto that mangere.¹
 That messenger full sone he wente,
 And did the kinges commaundement.
 Anone he commaunded bothe olde and yinge
 For to be at that weddyng,
 Both dukes and erles of muche myght,
 And ladyes that were fayre and bryght.
 As soone as ever they herde the crye,
 The lordes were full soone redy;
 With myrth and game and muche playe
 They wedded them on a solempne ² daye.
 A royall feest there was holde,
 With dukes and erles and barons bolde,
 And knyghtes and squyers of that countre,
 And sith ³ with all the comunalte:
 And certaynly, as the story sayes, 1030
 The revell lasted forty dayes;
 Tyll on a day the kyng him selfe
 To hym he toke his lordes twelfe,
 And so he dyd the squyer
 That wedded his doughter dere,
 And even in the myddes of the hall
 He made him kyng among them al;
 And all the lordes everychone
 They made him homage sone anon;
 And sithen they revelled all that day, 1040
 And toke theyr leve, and went theyr way,
 Eche lorde unto his owne countre,

¹ feast ² festive ³ afterward

Where that hym thought best to be.
 That yong man and the quene his wyfe,
 With joy and blysse they led theyr lyfe,
 For also farre as I have gone,
 Suche two lovers sawe I none:
 Therefore blessed may theyr soules be,
 Amen, amen, for charyte!

c. 1450?

PASTON LETTERS

Agnes Paston to William Paston

(This letter, written about 1440, is given in the original.

The other letters are modernised.)

To my worshepeful housbond, W. Paston, be this letter takyn.

Dere housbond, I recomaunde me to you, &c.

Blessyd be God I sende yow gode tydynggs of the comyng, and the brynggyn hoom, of the gentylwomman¹ that ye wetyn² of fro Redham, this same nyght, acordyng to poyntmen³ that ye made ther for yowr self.

And as for the furste aqweyntaunce be twhen John Paston and the seyde gentylwomman, she made hym gentil cher in gyntyl wise, and seyde, he was verrayly your son. And so I hope ther shall nede no gret trete⁴ be twyxe hym.

The parson of Stocton toold me, yif ye wolde byin⁵ her a goun⁶, here⁷ moder wolde yeve⁸ ther to a godely furre. The goun⁶ nedyth for to be had; and of colour it wolde be a godely blew, or erlys⁹ a bryghte sangueyn.

I prey yow do byen for me ij.pypys¹⁰ of gold. Your stewes¹¹ do weel.

¹ The prospective wife of her son John ² know ³ appointment
⁴ treaty ⁵ buy ⁶ gown ⁷ her ⁸ give ⁹ else ¹⁰ two
 rolls ¹¹ fishponds

The Holy Trinite have you in governaunce.

Wretyn at Paston, in hast, the Wednesday next after *Deus qui errantibus*,¹ for defaute² of a good secre-tarye.

Yowres,
Agn. Paston

To my right worshipful husband, John Paston, dwelling in the Inner Temple at London, in haste.

Right worshipful husband, I recommend me to you, desiring heartily to hear of your welfare, thanking God of your amending of the great disease that you have had, and I thank you for the letter that you sent me, for by my troth my mother and I were not at heart's ease from the time that we knew of your sickness, till we knew verily of your amending.

My mother vowed another image of wax of the weight of you, to our Lady of Walsingham, and she sent four nobles to the four orders of friars at Norwich to pray for you, and I have vowed to go on pilgrimage to Walsingham and to Saint Leonard's for you. By my troth I had never so heavy a season as I had from the time that I knew of your sickness till I knew of your amending, and yet my heart is in no great ease, and will not be, till I know that you be very whole. Your father and mine was this day sennight at Beccles, for a matter of the Prior of Bromholm, and he lay at Gelderstone that night, and was there till it was nine of the clock and the other day. And I sent thither for a gown, and my mother said that I should have none until I had been there, and so they could get none.

My father Garneys sent me word that he should have been here the next week and my Emme also, and play

¹ The Collect for the third Sunday after Easter ² in default

them here with their hawks, and they should have me home with them. And so God help me, I shall excuse myself of my going thither if I may, for I suppose that I shall the more readily have tidings from you here than I should have there. I shall send my mother a token that she brought to me, for I suppose that the time is come that I should send it to her, if I keep the vow that I have made. I suppose I have told you what it was. I pray you heartily that you will vouchsafe to send me a letter as hastily as you may, if writing be no pain to you, and that you will vouchsafe to send me word how your sore does. If I might have had my will, I should have seen you ere this time. I would you were at home, if it were for your ease, and your sore might be as well looked to here as it is where you are now, rather than a new gown though it were of scarlet. I pray you if your sore be whole, and so that you may endure to ride when my father comes to London, that he will ask leave and come home when the horse should be sent home again, for I hope you shall be kept as tenderly here as you are at London. I have no leisure to write the quarter of what I should say to you if I might speak with you. I shall send you another letter as hastily as I may. I thank you that you will vouchsafe to remember my girdle, and that you would write to me at the time, for I suppose that writing is not comfortable for you. Almighty God have you in His keeping, and send you health. Written at Oxnead, in right great haste, on Saint Michael's even.

Yours,

M. Paston

(1443)

To Edmund Paston, of Clifford's Inn, in London,
be this letter taken.

To mine well-beloved son, I greet you well, and advise you to think once more of the day of your father's counsel to learn the law, for he said many times that whosoever should dwell at Paston should need to know how to defend himself.

The Vicar of Paston and your father, in Lent last year was, were thorough and accorded, and boundaries set how broad the way should be, and now he has pulled up the boundaries, and says he will make a ditch from the corner of his wall right over the way to the new ditch of the great close. And there is a man called Palmer, too, that had of your father certain lands in Trunch over seven years or eight years ago, for grain, and truly has paid all the years and now he has suffered the grain to be taken for eight shillings of rent to Gimmingham, which your father never paid. Geoffrey asked Palmer why the rent was not asked in my husband's time, and Palmer said because he was a great man, and a wise man of the law, and that was the cause men would not ask him the rent.

I send you the names of the men that cast down the pits that were in Genney's Close, written in a bill enclosed in this letter.

I send you this letter not to make you weary of Paston, for I live in hope, and you will learn that they shall be made weary of their work, for in good faith I dare well say it was your father's last will to have done right well to that place, and that can I show of good proof, though men would say nay. God make you a right good man, and send God's blessing and mine. Written in haste at Norwich, the Thursday after Candlemas-day.

Learn from your brother John how many joists will serve the parlor and the chapel at Paston, and what

length they must be, and what breadth and thickness they must be, for your father's will was, as I know verily, that they should be nine inches one way, and seven another way, and arrange therefore that they may be squared there, and sent hither, for here can none such be had in this country; and say to your brother John it were well done to think on Stansred Church; and I pray you to send me tidings from beyond sea, for here they are afraid to tell such as is reported.

By your mother,

Agnes Paston
(1444-5)

To my well-beloved son, John Paston, be this delivered in haste.

Son, I greet you well, and let you know, that forasmuch as your brother Clement lets me know that you desire faithfully my blessing; that blessing that I prayed your father to give you the last day that ever he spoke, and the blessings of all saints under heaven, and mine might come to you all days and times; and think verily none other but that you have it, and shall have it, on condition that I find you kind and willing to the weal of your father's soul, and to the welfare of your brethren.

By my counsel, dispose yourself as much as you may to have less to do in the world; your father said, "In little business lieth much rest." This world is but a thoroughfare, and full of woe; and when we depart therefrom, right nothing bear with us but our good deeds and ill; and there knoweth no man how soon God will call him; and therefore it is good for every creature to be ready. Whom God visiteth, him he loveth.

And as for your brethren, they will I know certainly labor all that in them lies for you. Our Lord have you in his blessed keeping, body and soul. Written at Norwich, the 29th day of October.

By your mother,

Agnes Paston.

(c. 1444)

To my right honorable master, John Paston

Right honorable and my right entirely beloved master ——. Pleaseth it, your good and gracious mastership, tenderly to consider the great losses and hurts that your poor petitioner hath, and hath had, ever since the commons of Kent came to the Blackheath, and that is fifteen years past; whereas my master, Sir John Falstolf, knight, that is your testator, commanded your beseecher to take a man, and two of the best horses that were in his stable, with him, to ride to the commons of Kent to get the articles that they come for. And so I did, and all so soon as I came to the Blackheath, the captain¹ made the commons take me; and for the salvation of my master's horses I made my fellow to ride away with the two horses; and I was brought forthwith before the Captain of Kent; and the captain demanded of me the cause of my coming thither, and why I made my fellow steal away with the horses; and I said that I came thither to cheer with my wife's brethren and others that were my allies, and gossips of mine that were present there. And then was there one there who said to the captain that I was one of Sir John Falstolf's men, and the two horses were Sir John

¹Jack Cade, soldier, and leader of a popular revolt against the government. The events referred to in the letter took place in 1450; the letter was written in 1465. By that time Falstolf was dead; John Paston was his executor.

Falstolf's; and then the captain let cry Treason upon me throughout all the field, and brought me at four parts of the field, with a herald of the Duke of Exeter¹ before me, in the Duke's coat-of-arms, making four oyez² at four parts of the field, proclaiming openly by the said herald that I was sent thither for to espy their puissance and their habiliments of war, from the greatest traitor that was in England or in France, as the said captain made proclamation at that time, from one Sir John Falstolf, knight, the which diminished all the garrisons of Normandy, and Manns, and Mayn, the which was the cause of the losing of all the king's title and right of an heritance that he had beyond the sea. And moreover, he said that the said Sir John Falstolf had furnished his place with the old soldiers of Normandy, and habiliments of war, to destroy the commons of Kent when they came to Southwark, and therefore he said plainly that I should lose my head; and so forthwith I was taken and led to the captain's tent, and one axe and one block were brought forth to have smitten off my head. And then my master Poynyngs your brother, with other of my friends came, and prevented the captain, and said plainly that there should die an hundred or two in case I died; and so by that means my life was saved at that time.

And then I was sworn to the captain, and to the commons, that I should go to Southwark and array me in the best wise that I could, and come again to them to help them; and so I got the articles, and brought them to my master, and that cost me more amongst the commons that day than 27 s.

Whereupon I came to my master Falstolf and brought

¹ The herald was probably forced to perform his duties. ² Hear!
(A signal for calling court to order.)

him the articles, and informed him of the matter, and counselled him to put away all his habiliments of war, and the old soldiers, and so he did, and went himself to the Tower, and all his household with him but Betts and one Matthew Brayn; and had I not been, the commons would have burned his place and all his tenuries; where though it cost me of my own proper goods at that time more than six marks in meat and drink, and yet notwithstanding the captain that same time let take me in at the White Hart in Southwark, and there commanded Lovelace to despoil me of mine array, and so he did. And there he took a fine gown of muster devillers¹ furred with fine beavers, and one pair of brigandines² covered with blue velvet and gilt nails, with leg-harness; the value of the gown and the brigandines 8L.

Item, the captain sent certain of his followers to my chamber in your house, and there they broke up my chest and took away one obligation of mine that was due unto me of 36L. by a priest of Paul's, and one other obligation of one knight of 10L., and my purse with five rings of gold and 17s. 6d. of gold and silver; and one harness complete of the touch of Milan;³ and one gown of fine perse blue,⁴ furred with martens; and two gowns, one furred with badge fur, and one other lined with frieze;⁵ and there would have smitten off mine head when they had despoiled me at the White Hart. And there my master Pynyngs and my friends saved me, and so I was put up, till at night that the battle was at London Bridge; and then at night the captain put me out into the battle at the bridge, and there I was wounded, and hurt near hand to death; and there I was six hours

¹ probably some kind of velvet ² coat-of-mail ³ i. e. made in Milan ⁴ bluish gray ⁵ coarse cloth

in the battle, and might never come out thereof. And four times before that time I was carried about throughout Kent and Sussex, and there they would have smitten off my head; and in Kent where my wife dwelled, they took away all our goods movable that we had, and there would have hanged my wife and five of my children, and left her no more goods but her kirtle and her smock. And soon after that commotion the Bishop of Rochester impeached me to the queen, and so I was arrested by the queen's commandment into the Marshalsea, and there was in right great duress and fear of my life, and was threatened to have been hanged, drawn, and quartered. And so they would have made me impeach my master Falstolf of treason, and because I would not, they had me up to Westminster, and there would have sent me to the gaol-house at Windsor, but my wife's and one cousin of mine own that were yeomen to the crown, they went to the king, and got grace and one charter of pardon.

Per le vostre,

J. Payn
(1465)

Unto my right reverend Sir, and my good master,
John Paston.

Right worthy and worshipful sir and my right good master, I recommend me unto you, thanking you evermore of your great gentleness and good masterhood shown unto me at all times, and especially now to my heart's ease, which on my part cannot be rewarded, but my simple service is ever ready at your commandment; furthermore, as for the matter that you know of, I have labored so to my father that your intent as for the

jointure shall be fulfilled; and, Sir, I beseech you since I do my part to fulfill your will, that you will show me your good masterhood in her chamber as my full trust is, insomuch that it shall not hurt you or any of yours, and the profit thereof shall be unto the avail of my mistress your sister, and to me, and to no other creature.

And also my mistress your mother shall not be charged with her board after the day of the marriage, but I to discharge her of her person; and to ease me that hath her chamber may be no contradiction.

And, Sir, I am ready, and always will to perform that I have said unto you, &c.

Furthermore liketh you to know, I was on Thursday last past at Cavendish to deliver an estate to Wentworth in the land that was my brother Cavendish's, as I told you when I was last with you, and there I spake with Crane, and he besought me that I would send over to my mistress your mother for his excuse, for he might not be with her at this time; but on the Saturday in Easter week he will not fail to be with her, so he counselled me that I and my brother Denston should meet with him there, and so without your better advice I and my brother purpose us to be with you there at that time, for the sooner the better for me, for, as to my conceit the days be waxen wonderfully long in a short time, wherefore I beseech you send me your advice how you will have me ruled, &c.

Written with my chancery hand in right great haste on the Friday before Palm Sunday.

Your

John Clopton
(April 12, 1454)

SIR THOMAS MALORY (15th c.)

Le Morte Darthur

(Editor's note: A specimen with the original spelling, and with punctuation slightly modernised is given. The rest of the selection has been changed to conform more nearly to present usage.)

Book XXI, Chap. 1

As syr Mordred was rular of alle englond he dyd do make letters as though that they came from beyonde the see, and the letters specefyed that Kynge Arthur was slayn in bataylle wyth sir Launcelot. Wherefore Syr Mordred made a parlemente, and called the lordes togyder, and there he made them to choose hym kyng and soo was he crowned at caunterburye and helde a feest there XV dayes, and afterward he drewe hym unto wynchester, and there he tooke the Quene Guenever and sayd playnly that he wolde wedde hyr whyche was his unkyls wyf and his faders wyf. And soo he made redy for the feest, and a day prefyxt that they shold be wedded, wherefore quene Gwenever was passyng hevvy. But she durst not discover hyr herte but spake fayre and agreyd to syr Mordredes wylle. Thenne she desyred of syr Mordred for to goo to London to bye alle manere of thynges that longed unto the weddyng, and by cause of hyr fayre speche Syr Mordred trusted hyr wel ynough and gaf her leve to goo. And soo whan she came to London she took the toure of London, and sodeynlye in alle haste pssyble she stuffed hyt wyth alle manere of vytaylle and wel garnysshed it with men and soo kepte hyt. Than whan Syr Mordred wyste and

understode how he was begyled, he was passyng wrothe oute of mesure. And a shorte tale for to make he wente and layed a myghty syege aboute the toure of London and made many grete assaultes therat, and threwe many grete engynes unto theym, and shotte grete gonnes. But alle myght not prevaylle Syr Mordred, for quene Guenever wolde never for fayre speche nor for foule wold never truste to come in hys handes ageyn. Thene came the bysshop of caunterburye the wyche was a noble clerke and an holy man, and thus he sayd to Syr Mordred: Syr, what wyl ye doo wyl ye fyrst dysplese god and sythen shame your self and al knyghthode? Is not kyng Arthur your uncle no ferther but your moders broder, and on hyr hym self kyng Arthur bygate you upon his own syster? Therfor how may you wedde your faders wyf? Syr, sayd the noble clerke, leve this oppynyon or I shall curse you wyth book and belle and candell. Do thou thy werst, said syr Mordred. Wyt thou wel I shal defye thee, sir, sayd the bysshop, and wyt you wel I shal not fere me to do that me ought to do. Also where ye noyse where my lord Arthur is slayne, and that is not so, and therefore ye wyl make a foule werke in this londe. Pees, thou fals preest, sayd syr Mordred, for and thou chauffe me ony more I shal make stryke of thy heed. So the bysshop departed and dyd the cursyng in the most orgulist wyse that myght be doon. And than Syr mordred sought the bysshop of caunterburye for to have slayne hym. Than the bysshop fledde and toke parte of his goodes with hym and went nygh unto glastynburye, and there he was as preest Eremyte in a chapel, and lyved in poverté and in holy prayers, for wel he understode that myschevous warre was at honde.

Then Sir Mordred sought on Queen Guenever by let-

ters and messages, and by fair means and foul means to have her come out of the Tower of London; but all this availed not, for she answered him shortly, openly and privily, that she had lever slay herself than be married to him. Then came word to Sir Mordred that King Arthur had araised the siege for Sir Launcelot, and he was coming homeward with a great host, to be avenged upon Sir Mordred; wherefore Sir Mordred had letters written to all the barony of this land, and many people drew to him. For then was the common voice among them that with Arthur was none other life but war and strife, and with Sir Mordred was great joy and bliss. Thus was Sir Arthur condemned, and evil said of. And many there were that King Arthur had made up of nought, and given them lands, might not then say him a good word. Lo ye all Englishmen, see ye not what a mischief here was! for he that was the greatest king and knight of the world, and most loved the fellowship of noble knights, and by him they were all upholden, now might not these Englishmen hold them content with him. Lo thus was the old custom and usage of this land; and also men say that we of this land have not yet lost nor forgotten that custom and usage. Alas, this is a great default of us Englishmen, for there may no thing please us no term. And so fared the people at that time, they were better pleased with Sir Mordred than they were with King Arthur; and many people drew unto Sir Mordred, and said they would abide with him for better and for worse. And so Sir Mordred drew with a great host to Dover, for there he heard say that Sir Arthur would arrive, and so he thought to beat his own father from his lands; and the most part of all England held with Sir Mordred, the people were so new fangle.

CHAPTER II

HOW AFTER THAT KING ARTHUR HAD TIDINGS, HE RETURNED AND CAME TO DOVER, WHERE SIR MORDRED MET HIM TO HINDER HIS LANDING; AND OF THE DEATH OF SIR GAWAINE.

AND so as Sir Mordred was at Dover with his host, there came King Arthur with a great navy of ships, and galleys, and carracks. And there was Sir Mordred ready awaiting upon his landing, to hinder his own father from landing upon the land that he was king over. Then there was launching of great boats and small, and full of noble men of arms; and there was much slaughter of gentle knights, and many a full bold baron was laid full low, on both sides. But King Arthur was so courageous that there might no manner of knights hinder him from landing, and his knights fiercely followed him; and so they landed in spite of Sir Mordred and all his power, and put Sir Mordred aback, that he fled and all his people. So when this battle was done, King Arthur let bury his people that were dead. And then was noble Sir Gawaine found in a great boat, lying more than half dead. When Sir Arthur wist that Sir Gawaine was laid so low, he went unto him; and there the king made sorrow out of measure, and took Sir Gawaine in his arms, and thrice he there swooned. And then when he awaked, he said: "Alas, Sir Gawaine, my sister's son, here now thou liest, the man in the world that I loved most; and now is my joy gone, for now, my nephew Sir Gawaine, I will discover me unto your person: in Sir Launcelot and you I most had my joy, and mine trust, and now have I lost my joy of you both;

wherefore all mine earthly joy is gone from me." "Mine uncle King Arthur," said Sir Gawaine, "wit you well my death day is come, and all is through mine own hastiness and wilfulness; for I am smitten upon the old wound which Sir Launcelot gave me, by which I feel well I must die; and had Sir Launcelot been with you as he used to be, this unhappy war had never begun; and of all this am I causer, for Sir Launcelot and his blood, through their prowess, held all your cankered enemies in subjection and danger. And now," said Sir Gawaine, "ye shall miss Sir Launcelot. But alas, I would not accord with him, and therefore," said Sir Gawaine, "I pray you, fair uncle, that I may have paper, pen, and ink, that I may write to Sir Launcelot a note with mine own hands." And then when paper and ink was brought, then Gawaine was set up weakly by King Arthur, for he was shriven a little before; and then he wrote thus, as the French book maketh mention: "Unto Sir Launcelot, flower of all noble knights that ever I heard of or saw in my days, I, Sir Gawaine, King Lot's son of Orkney, sister's son unto the noble King Arthur, send thee greeting, and let thee have knowledge that the tenth day of May I was smitten upon the old wound that thou gavest me afore the city of Benwick, and through the same wound that thou gavest me I am come to my death day. And I will that all the world wit, that I, Sir Gawaine, knight of the Table Round, sought my death, and not through thy deserving, but it was mine own seeking; wherefore I beseech thee, Sir Launcelot, to return again unto this realm, and see my tomb, and pray some prayer more or less for my soul. And this same day that I wrote this note, I was hurt to the death in the same wound, the which I had of thy hand, Sir Launcelot; for of a more noble man

might I not be slain. Also Sir Launcelot, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, make no tarrying, but come over the sea in all haste, that thou mayst with thy noble knights rescue that noble king that made thee knight, that is my lord Arthur, for he is full straitly circumstanced with a false traitor, that is my half-brother, Sir Mordred; and he hath let crown him king, and would have wedded my lady Queen Guenever, and so had he done had she not put herself in the Tower of London. And so the tenth day of May last past, my lord Arthur and we all landed upon them at Dover; and there we put that false traitor, Sir Mordred, to flight, and there it misfortuned me to be stricken upon thy stroke. And this letter was written but two hours and a half afore my death, written with mine own hand, and so subscribed with part of my heart's blood. And I require thee, most famous knight of the world, that thou wilt see my tomb." And then Sir Gawaine wept, and King Arthur wept; and then they swooned both. And when they awaked both, the king made Sir Gawaine receive his Savior. And then Sir Gawaine prayed the king to send for Sir Launcelot, and to cherish him above all other knights. And so at the hour of noon Sir Gawaine yielded up the spirit; and then the king had him interred in a chapel within Dover Castle; and there yet all men may see the skull of him, and the same wound is seen that Sir Launcelot gave him in battle. Then was it told the king that Sir Mordred was quartered in a new field upon Barham Down. And upon the morn the king rode thither to him, and there was a great battle betwixt them, and many people were slain on both sides, but at the last Sir Arthur's party stood best, and Sir Mordred and his party fled unto Canterbury.

CHAPTER III

HOW AFTER, SIR GAWAINE'S GHOST APPEARED TO KING ARTHUR, AND WARNED HIM THAT HE SHOULD NOT FIGHT THAT DAY.

AND then the king let search all the towns for his knights that were slain, and interred them; and salved them with soft salves that so sore were wounded. Then many people drew unto King Arthur. And then they said that Sir Mordred warred upon King Arthur with wrong. And then King Arthur drew him with his host down by the seaside westward toward Salisbury; and there was a day assigned betwixt King Arthur and Sir Mordred, that they should meet upon a down beside Salisbury, and not far from the seaside; and this day was assigned on a Monday after Trinity Sunday, whereof King Arthur was passing glad, that he might be avenged upon Sir Mordred. Then Sir Mordred araised many people about London, for they of Kent, Southsex, and Surrey, Estsex, and of Southfolk, and of Northfolk, held the most part with Sir Mordred; and many a full noble knight drew unto Sir Mordred and to the king: but they that loved Sir Launcelot drew unto Sir Mordred. So upon Trinity Sunday at night, King Arthur dreamed a wonderful dream, and that was this: that him seemed he sat upon a platform in a chair, and the chair was fast to a wheel, and thereupon sat King Arthur in the richest cloth of gold that might be made; and the king thought there was under him, far from him, an hideous deep black water, and therein were all manner of serpents, and worms, and wild beasts, foul and horrible; and suddenly the king thought the wheel turned upside down, and he fell among the serpents, and

every beast took him by a limb; and then the king cried as he lay in his bed and slept: "Help." And then knights, squires, and yeomen awaked the king; and then he was so amazed that he wist not where he was; and then he fell a-slumbering again, not sleeping nor thoroughly waking. So it seemed to the king verily that there came Sir Gawaine unto him with a number of fair ladies with him. And when King Arthur saw him, then he said: "Welcome, my sister's son; I weened thou hadst been dead, and now I see thee alive, much am I beholden unto almighty Jesu. O fair nephew and my sister's son, what be these ladies that hither be come with you?" "Sir," said Sir Gawaine, "all these be ladies for whom I have fought when I was man living, and all these are those that I did battle for in righteous quarrel; and God hath given them that grace at their great prayer, because I did battle for them, that they should bring me hither unto you: thus much hath God given me leave, for to warn you of your death; for an ye fight tomorrow with Sir Mordred, as ye both have assigned, doubt ye not ye must be slain, and the most part of your people on both sides. And for the great grace and goodness that almighty Jesu hath unto you, and for pity of you, and many more other good men there shall be slain, God hath sent me to you of his special grace, to give you warning that in no wise ye do battle tomorrow, but that ye take a treaty for a month day; and proffer you largely, so as tomorrow to be put in a delay. For within a month shall come Sir Launcelot with all his noble knights, and rescue you worshipfully, and slay Sir Mordred, and all that ever will hold with him." Then Sir Gawaine and all the ladies vanished. And anon the king called upon his knights, squires, and yeomen, and charged them swiftly to fetch his noble lords and wise bishops unto him. And when they were come,

the king told them his vision, what Sir Gawaine had told him, and warned him that if he fought on the morn he should be slain. Then the king commanded Sir Lucan the Butler, and his brother Sir Bedivere, with two bishops with them, and charged them in any wise, an they might, "Take a treaty for a month day with Sir Mordred, and spare not, proffer him lands and goods as much as ye think best." So then they departed, and came to Sir Mordred, where he had a grim host of an hundred thousand men. And there they entreated Sir Mordred long time; and at the last Sir Mordred was agreed for to have Cornwall and Kent, by Arthur's days: after, all England, after the days of King Arthur.

CHAPTER IV

HOW BY MISADVENTURE OF AN ADDER THE BATTLE BEGAN,
WHERE MORDRED WAS SLAIN, AND ARTHUR HURT TO THE
DEATH.

THEN were they condescended that King Arthur and Sir Mordred should meet betwixt both their hosts, and every each of them should bring fourteen persons; and they came with this word unto Arthur. Then said he: "I am glad that this is done"; and so he went into the field. And when Arthur should depart, he warned all his host that an they see any sword drawn: "Look ye come on fiercely, and slay that traitor, Sir Mordred, for I in no wise trust him." In likewise Sir Mordred warned his host that: "An ye see any sword drawn, look that ye come on fiercely, and so slay all that ever before you standeth; for in no wise I will not trust for this treaty, for I know well my father will be avenged on me." And so they met as their appointment was, and so they were agreed and accorded thoroughly; and wine was

fetches, and they drank. Right soon came an adder out of a little heath bush, and it stung a knight on the foot. And when the knight felt him stung, he looked down and saw the adder, and then he drew his sword to slay the adder, and thought of none other harm. And when the host on both sides saw that sword drawn, then they blew clarions, trumpets, and horns, and shouted grimly. And so both hosts dressed them together. And King Arthur took his horse, and said: "Alas this unhappy day!" and so rode to his party. And Sir Mordred likewise. And never was there seen a more doleful battle in any Christian land; for there was but rushing and riding, thrusting and striking, and many a grim word was there spoken either to other, and many a deadly stroke. But ever King Arthur rode throughout the battle of Sir Mordred many times, and did full nobly as a noble king should, and at all times he fainted never; and Sir Mordred that day put him in devoir, and in great peril. And thus they fought all the long day, and never stinted till the noble knights were laid to the cold earth; and ever they fought still till it was near night, and by that time was there an hundred thousand laid dead upon the down. Then was Arthur raging mad out of measure, when he saw his people so slain from him. Then the king looked about him, and then was he ware, of all his host and of all his good knights, were left no more alive but two knights; that one was Sir Lucan the Butler, and his brother Sir Bedivere, and they were full sore wounded. "Jesu mercy," said the king, "where are all my noble knights become? Alas that ever I should see this doleful day, for now," said Arthur, "I am come to mine end. But would to God that I wist where were that traitor Sir Mordred, that hath caused all this mischief." Then was King Arthur ware where Sir Mordred leaned upon his sword among

a great heap of dead men. "Now give me my spear," said Arthur unto Sir Lucan, "for yonder I have espied the traitor that all this woe hath wrought." "Sir, let him be," said Sir Lucan, "for he is unhappy; and if ye pass this unhappy day ye shall be right well revenged upon him. Good lord, remember ye of your night's dream, and what the spirit of Sir Gawaine told you this night, yet God of his great goodness hath preserved you hitherto. Therefore, for God's sake, my lord, leave off by this, for blessed be God ye have won the field, for here we be three alive, and with Sir Mordred is none alive; and if ye leave off now this wicked day of destiny is past." "Tide me death, betide me life," saith the king, "now I see him yonder alone he shall never escape mine hands, for at a better avail shall I never have him." "God speed you well," said Sir Bedivere. Then the king took his spear in both his hands, and ran toward Sir Mordred, crying: "Traitor, now is thy death-day come." And when Sir Mordred heard Sir Arthur, he ran until him with his sword drawn in his hand. And there King Arthur smote Sir Mordred under the shield, with a thrust of his spear, throughout the body, more than a fathom. And when Sir Mordred felt that he had his death-wound he thrust himself with the might that he had up to the bur of King Arthur's spear. And right so he smote his father Arthur, with his sword holden in both his hands, on the side of the head, that the sword pierced the helmet and the brain pan, and therewithal Sir Mordred fell stark dead to the earth; and the noble Arthur fell in a swoon to the earth, and there he swooned oftentimes. And Sir Lucan the Butler and Sir Bedivere oftentimes lifted him up. And so weakly they led him betwixt them both, to a little chapel not far from the seaside. And when the king was there he thought him well eased. Then heard they people cry

in the field. "Now go thou, Sir Lucan," said the king, "and let me know what betokens that noise in the field." So Sir Lucan departed, for he was grievously wounded in many places. And so as he went, he saw and hearkened by the moonlight, how that pillagers and robbers were come into the field, to pillage and to rob many a full noble knight of brooches, and beads, of many a good ring, and of many a rich jewel; and who that were not dead utterly, there they slew them for their harness and their riches. When Sir Lucan understood this work, he came to the king as soon as he might, and told him all that he had heard and seen. "Therefore by my rede," said Sir Lucan, "it is best that we bring you to some town." "I would it were so," said the king.

CHAPTER V

HOW KING ARTHUR COMMANDED TO CAST HIS SWORD EXCALIBUR INTO THE WATER, AND HOW HE WAS DELIVERED TO LADIES IN A BARGE.

"BUT I may not stand, mine head works so. Ah Sir Launcelot," said King Arthur, "this day have I sore missed thee: alas, that ever I was against thee, for now have I my death, whereof Sir Gawaine me warned in my dream." Then Sir Lucan took up the king the one part, and Sir Bedivere the other part, and in the lifting the king swooned; and Sir Lucan fell in a swoon with the lift, that the part of his guts fell out of his body, and therewith the noble knight's heart brast. And when the king awoke, he beheld Sir Lucan, how he lay foaming at the mouth, and part of his guts lay at his feet. "Alas," said the king, "this is to me a full heavy sight, to see this noble duke so die for my sake, for he would have holpen me, that had more need of help

than I. Alas, he would not complain him, his heart was so set to help me: now Jesu have mercy upon his soul!" Then Sir Bedivere wept for the death of his brother. "Leave this mourning and weeping," said the king, "for all this will not avail me, for wit thou well an I might live myself, the death of Sir Lucan would grieve me evermore; but my time hieth fast," said the king. "Therefore," said Arthur unto Sir Bedivere, "take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again and tell me what thou there seest." "My lord," said Bedivere, "your commandment shall be done, and lightly bring you word again." So Sir Bedivere departed, and by the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and the haft was all of precious stones; and then he said to himself: "If I throw this rich sword in the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss." And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree. And so, as soon as he might, he came again unto the king, and said he had been at the water, and had thrown the sword in the water. "What saw thou there?" said the king. "Sir," he said, "I saw nothing but waves and winds." "That is untruly said of thee," said the king, "therefore go thou lightly again, and do my commandment; as thou art to me lief and dear, spare not, but throw it in." Then Sir Bedivere returned again, and took the sword in his hand; and then him thought sin and shame to throw away that noble sword, and so again he hid the sword, and returned again, and told to the king that he had been at the water, and done his commandment. "What saw thou there?" said the king. "Sir," he said, "I saw nothing but the waters ripple and waves wan." "Ah, traitor untrue," said King Arthur, "now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would have weened that, thou

that hast been to me so lief and dear? and thou art named a noble knight, and would betray me for the richness of the sword. But now go again lightly, for thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And but if thou do now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with mine own hands; for thou wouldst for my rich sword see me dead." Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water side; and there he bound the girdle about the hilt, and then he threw the sword as far into the water, as he might; and there came an arm and an hand above the water and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water. So Sir Bedivere came again to the king, and told him what he saw. "Alas," said the king, "help me hence, for I dread me I have tarried overlong." Then Sir Bedivere took the king upon his back, and so went with him to that water side. And when they were at the water side, even fast by the bank lay a little barge with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen, and they all had black hoods, and they all wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur. "Now put me into the barge," said the king. And so he did softly; and there received him three queens with great mourning; and so they set them down, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head. And then that queen said: "Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? alas, this wound on your head hath caught over-much cold." And so then they rowed from the land, and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him. Then Sir Bedivere cried: "Ah my lord Arthur, what shall become of me, now ye go from me and leave me here alone among mine enemies?" "Comfort thyself," said the king, "and do as well as thou mayest,

for in me is no trust for to trust in; for I will into the vale of Avilion to heal me of my grievous wound: and if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul." But ever the queens and ladies wept and shrieked, that it was pity to hear. And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and wailed, and so took the forest; and so he went all that night, and in the morning he was ware betwixt two wooded hills, of a chapel and an hermitage.

CHAPTER VI

HOW SIR BEDIVERE FOUND HIM ON THE MORROW DEAD IN AN HERMITAGE, AND HOW HE ABODE THERE WITH THE HERMIT.

THEN was Sir Bedivere glad, and thither he went; and when he came into the chapel, he saw where lay an hermit grovelling on all four, there fast by a tomb was new dug. When the hermit saw Sir Bedivere he knew him well, for he was but little tofore Bishop of Canterbury, that Sir Mordred put to flight. "Sir," said Bedivere, "what man is there interred that ye pray so fast for?" "Fair son," said the hermit, "I wot not verily, but by deeming. But this night, at midnight, here came a number of ladies, and brought hither a dead corpse, and prayed me to bury him; and here they offered an hundred tapers, and they gave me an hundred gold coins." "Alas," said Sir Bedivere, "that was my lord King Arthur, that here lieth buried in this chapel." Then Sir Bedivere swooned; and when he awoke he prayed the hermit he might abide with him still there, to live with fasting and prayers. "For from hence will I never go," said Sir Bedivere, "by my will, but all the days of my life here to pray for my lord Arthur." "Ye

are welcome to me," said the hermit, "for I know ye better than ye ween that I do. Ye are the bold Bedivere, and the full noble duke, Sir Lucan the Butler, was your brother." Then Sir Bedivere told the hermit all as ye have heard before. So there bode Sir Bedivere with the hermit that was before Bishop of Canterbury, and there Sir Bedivere put upon him poor clothes, and served the hermit full lowly in fasting and in prayers. Thus of Arthur I find never more written in books that be authorised, nor more of the very certainty of his death heard I never read, but thus was he led away in a ship wherein were three queens; that one was King Arthur's sister, Queen Morgan le Fay; the other was the Queen of Northgalis; the third was the Queen of the Waste Lands. Also there was Nimue, the chief lady of the lake, that had wedded Pelleas the good knight; and this lady had done much for King Arthur, for she would never suffer Sir Pelleas to be in any place where he should be in danger of his life; and so he lived to the uttermost of his days with her in great rest. More of the death of King Arthur could I never find, but that ladies brought him to his burials; and such one was buried there, that the hermit bare witness that sometime was Bishop of Canterbury, but yet the hermit knew not in certain that he was verily the body of King Arthur: for this tale Sir Bedivere, knight of the Table Round, made it to be written.

CHAPTER VII

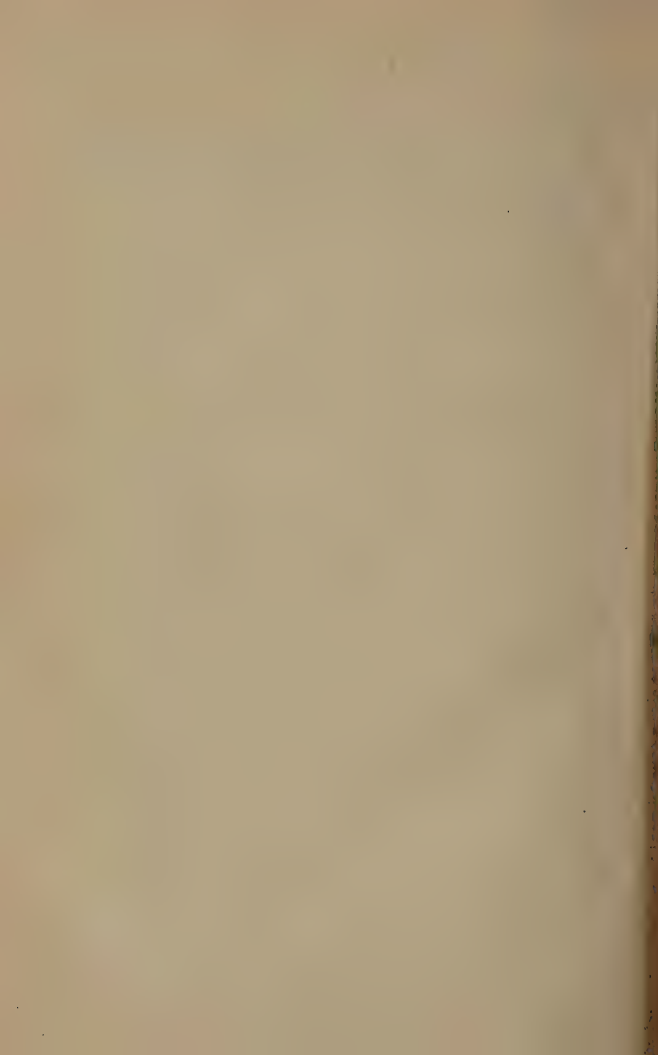
OF THE OPINION OF SOME MEN OF THE DEATH OF KING ARTHUR.

YET some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord

Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in this world he changed his life. But many men say that there is written upon his tomb this verse: *Hic jacet Arthurus, Rex quondam Rexque futurus*.¹

c. 1470

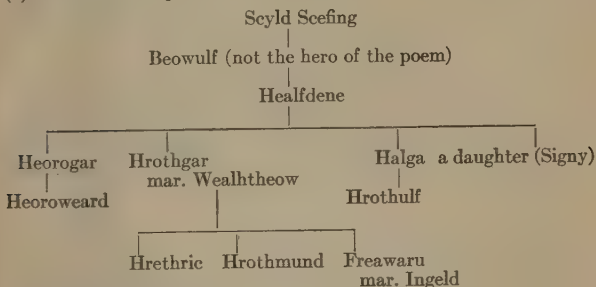
¹ Here lies Arthur, King aforetime, and King to be.



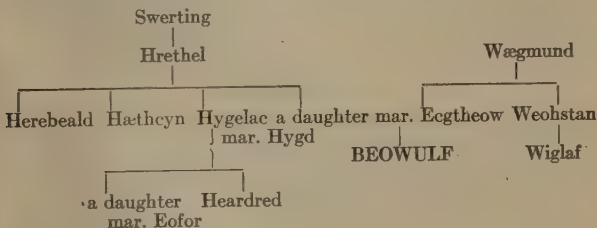
NOTES

Genealogical Tables to *Beowulf*

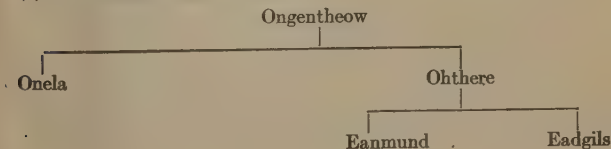
(1) *The Danish Royal Line*



(2) *The Great Royal Family*



(3) *The Swedish Royal Family*



BEOWULF

THE SCENE

Heorot, the hall of the Danish king Hrothgar, was probably situated on or near the site of Leire in Zealand. In Heorot, Beowulf fights with Grendel, having come from the land of the Geats, in Southern Sweden, to do so, and later fights Grendel's mother there, too. After these contests Beowulf returns with his men to his home, where in his old age he meets his death in slaughtering another dragon. The scene is consequently not English, but Southern Scandinavian.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

While most of the events are mythological, certain elements in the poem are historical. Thus, Eormannic was the king of the Goths, noted for his tyranny (he committed suicide about 375 A.D.). Hygelac, Beowulf's uncle, attacked the Franks sometime between 512 and 520 A.D., and was defeated. Many of the warriors cited appear in other early accounts and undoubtedly were historical figures. The warlike spirit of the various tribes is of course clearly reflected in the poem.

PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE POEM

Pagan customs are frequently referred to: sacrifices to idols, cremation, observing of omens, and the power of Wyrð is felt throughout the poem. Side by side with these remnants of paganism, however, is a wealth of Christian material: the might of the Christian God, the terrors of hell, the power of the devil, the story of Cain and Abel, the song of Creation.

DEOR'S LAMENT

This is the oldest English lyric, and is unique in the poetry of the period in that it has a refrain. Deor, a scop, has been out-rivalled by Heorrenda, and deprived of his land. In order to comfort himself Deor calls to mind instances of distress which time has cured.

The translations of this poem, of the *Banished Wife's Complaint*, and of the *Riddles*, are by Margaret Beck McCallum. The authorship of these poems is unknown.

Page 64. Weland. Famous in Teutonic saga as the Smith, a worker in metal. King Nithbad hamstrung him in order that Weland would thus be obliged to stay and work for him; but Weland made a pair of wings for himself, violated Nithbad's daughter Beadohild, killed Nithbad's sons, and escaped.

65. Theodoric. The Ostrogothic emperor, ruled in Italy 493-526. He was driven into exile by Attila. He is cited as an example of the suffering hero.

Eormanric. A Gothic king (d. 375), and known as a tyrant.

Heorrenda. A scop, and Deor's successful rival.

A LOVE-LETTER

The staff on which a lover has written his message asks a high-born lady to meet her lover in the distant home which he has prepared for her. The letters at the end of the poem stand for runes which perhaps represented the names of the lovers.

The translation is by Professor F. A. Blackburn, *Journal of Germanic Philology*, vol. III, pp. 1ff.

THE WANDERER

One of the best of the Old English elegiac poems. The translation of this poem and that of *The Sea-Farer* are by Professor J. D. Spaeth, (Pancoast and Spaeth, *Early English Poems*, Henry Holt and Company.)

CÆDMON

The *Hymn* is the only poem which modern scholars are willing to assign to Cædmon. The selection from *Genesis*, formerly attributed to Cædmon, and forming part of what is known as Cædmon's *Paraphrase*, is now considered to be of later date.

The poet has described the fall of the angels and the creation of the world. He then describes the temptation scene and the fall of man, as given in our selection.

The translation is by Professor C. W. Kennedy (*The Cædmon Poems*, George Routledge & Sons, London, E. P. Dutton & Co., New York).

BEDE

The Ecclesiastical History of the English People by Bede, written in Latin, is the source of much of our information on the period, and especially for the details of the life and death of Cædmon. Bede was an accurate historian and shows evidence of care in selecting his material. The *History* was translated, under Alfred's direction, into Old English.

The translation is by J. A. Giles.

CYNEWULF

The selection from Cynewulf is the third and last part of the *Christ*. (Part I, *The Advent*, Part 2, *The Ascension*). The original is written in the usual alliterative verse of Old English poetry.

The translation is by Professor C. W. Kennedy, (*The Poems of Cynewulf*, George Routledge & Sons, London, E. P. Dutton & Co., New York).

THE DREAM OF THE ROOD

The Dream of the Rood is generally considered the most beautiful of the Old English poems. It may have been written by Cynewulf. The poem consists of three parts: the description of the cross; the account of the crucifixion and of the resurrection, told by the cross, itself; and the reflections of the poet.

The translation is by Margaret Beck McCallum.

THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is one of the chief sources for the history of this period. It begins with an account of the invasion of Britain by Julius Cæsar; the last entry is for the year 1154. Alfred gave his encouragement to the continuance of the *Chronicle*.

The translation is by J. A. Giles.

THE BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

This poem is from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under date of 937 A.D. We owe it to the happy inspiration of some monk who preferred to record the event in verse rather than in prose. The poem celebrates the victory of Athelstan and his brother over a host of Scotch, Danes, and Irish.

The translation is by Alfred Tennyson.

ALFRED'S PREFACE TO THE PASTORAL CARE

The *Cura Pastoralis* (*The Pastoral Care*) of Gregory the Great (540-604) is a handbook for the direction of priests, a treatise on the offices of the clergy, on teaching, and on clerical duties. It was one of several works selected by Alfred for translation. Alfred's *Preface* is both plaintive and forceful.

THE VOYAGES OF OHTHERE AND WULFSTAN

The passages were inserted by Alfred in his translation of Orosius' *Universal History*, written in the early part of the fifth century. Orosius was a Spaniard and wrote his compendious work in Latin. The *History* was one of several books selected by Alfred for translation. The inclusion of these simple, first-hand accounts illustrates Alfred's interest in adding to the store of knowledge of his times.

ÆLFRIC

A selection from the *Homilies* of Ælfric is included in this volume because Ælfric is the outstanding example of Anglo-Saxon culture in its later period. Ælfric was born 955 and died some time after 1020. His *Homilies* (990-994) represent Anglo-Saxon prose at its best—lucid, direct, and forceful. The translation is by Benjamin Thorpe.

WULFSTAN

Wulfstan, Bishop of London in 1001, and later Archbishop of York, is the most important preacher of the period, Ælfric excluded. He died 1023. The *Address to the English*, while showing in the original the marks of an artificial style, is a stirring message. The translation is by Margaret Beck McCallum.

Page 166. Eadgar. The Pacific—king, 959–75.

168. Eadweard. The Martyr—king, 975–78.

Æthelred. The Unready—king, 979–1016.

169. *i.e.*, conditions are so upset that relatives may not claim wergild (blood-money), as they ought; on the contrary, the relatives of a thane must atone for the death of a man of the lowest social rank, a thrall.

171. Gildas (c. 516–570). Historian of the English conquest of Britain.

LAYAMON'S BRUT

Layamon was a priest in North Worcestershire. Practically nothing is known about him. He composed the *Brut* about 1205.

The poem purports to be a history of England, from the supposed landing of Brutus, descendant of Æneas, to Cadwallon, supposedly the last of the English kings. The account of Arthur given in the text forms part of the poem.

THE BESTIARY

The *Bestiary*, founded on the Latin *Physiologus* of one Thetbaldus, treats symbolically of the habits of thirteen "animals". The habits of the lion, eagle, etc., are used to symbolise spiritual truth. The poetry is crude, but interesting historically.

SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE

The Voyage and Travel of Sir John Mandeville is a compilation from many sources. The author, whoever he was, was not an Englishman; he probably wrote at Liège, shortly after the middle of the fourteenth century, and his work is one of the most delightful of literary frauds. In the Prologue he insists on a proper reverence for the Holy Land, and gives some details about himself which we must discount. In the body of his work he describes the various roads to Jerusalem, and gives an account of the marvels he has seen in the East. This work has been translated into almost every European language, and, as an additional evidence of its popularity, has come down to us in some three hundred manuscripts.

SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

This poem is the best of the alliterative romances. It was written between 1350 and 1375 by an unknown author to whom three other poems—*The Pearl*, *Cleanness*, and *Patience*—have been ascribed.

In making this translation the editor has considerably condensed the original.

PEARL

The *Pearl*, by an unknown author, is the outstanding elegiac poem in Middle English. It is possibly the lament of a father for his dead child.

The translation, in which most of the theological discussion has been omitted, is by S. Weir Mitchell (*Pearl*, The Century Company).

THE VISION OF WILLIAM CONCERNING PIERS THE PLOWMAN

The author of this poem is unknown. Tradition assigns it, but doubtfully, to William Langland. Three versions have come down. Version A, written about 1362, contains about 2600 lines. Version B, written about 1377, is nearly three times as long. Version C, written between 1393 and 1398, is a revision of B. The poem is written in the alliterative measure.

Piers Plowman is a series of dream-visions, under the guise of which the contemporary life in England is criticised. The indignation of the author, or authors, is stern; evil-doers of the time are castigated without reserve. The poem is one of the most important writings of the fourteenth century for a study of the period.

The translation is by Henry W. Wells.

THE BALLADS

The ballads date back to the fourteenth century or earlier. They were not written, and consequently we do not speak of author or authors; they were composed on subjects of popular interest and handed down from one generation to another orally. The composer does not let himself be seen in these compositions; the subject is treated quite objectively. For the most part they are tragic, although there are some humorous ballads (cf. *Get Up and Bar the Door*). The thought and language is simple, and repetition is used to add to the effect.

Bishop Percy in 1765 (in *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*) published many ballads. In 1882-1898 F. J. Child published the outstanding collection.

GLOSS TO "A HYMN TO THE VIRGIN"

Page 334. *Velut maris stella*. Like a star of the sea.
Parens et puella. A parent, though a mere girl.
Tam pia. So good.
Eva peccatrice. Because Eve sinned.
De te genetrix. Having thee for mother.
Salutis. Of salvation.
Virtutis. Of virtue.

Rosa sine spina. Rose without a thorn.

Gratia divina. Divine grace.

335. Electa. Chosen.

es Effecta. Thou art become.

Felix fecundata. Blessed one made fruitful.

Mater honorata. Honored mother.

In cruce. On the cross.

In luce. In light.

Ventre quam portasti. Whom thou borest in thy womb.

Parvum quem lactasti. Whom thou didst nurse when he was small.

Superni. Of heaven.

Inferni. Of hell.

THE QUEM-QUÆRITIS TROPE

This unadorned song from the Easter Mass represents the beginning of English drama. It dates from the ninth century.

SEPULCHRUM

From the Regularis Concordia of St. Ethelwold (965-975).

THE SHEPHERDS

Often referred to as the *Second Shepherd's Play*, and one of the most interesting of the Towneley Plays. Note the realism of the shepherd's complaint, the combination of horse-play and sacred theme, and the quaintness of the presents given to the Christ Child.

THE SQUYR OF LOWE DEGRE

While lacking the subtlety of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, this poem has a simplicity and a freshness that makes it one of the most delightful narratives of the fifteenth century. The themes are commonplace: the poor boy who rises to wealth, and the separated lovers who are united; but the ballad-like directness of the narration adds a quaintness that compensates for the well-worn themes. Notice that the unknown narrator does not make clear the reason for placing the dead steward by the girl's door.

THE PASTON LETTERS

The Paston Letters form the most remarkable series of letters ever published. Totalling almost eleven hundred letters they are of great value not only as a description of human nature in general but are highly interesting for the light they shed on the period which they cover (1422-1509). The first two volumes of these letters were published in 1787 by John Fenn; the third and fourth volumes appeared in 1789; and the fifth volume, years after Fenn's death, in 1823. The

standard text is that of James Gairdner, vol. 1, 1872, vol. 2, 1874, vol. 3, 1875.

In the fifteenth century, at which time the Pastons first come to our attention, the family was small gentry in Norfolk. The line begins for us with William Paston, who served under Henry VI, and was called the Good Judge. His son John became executor to Sir John Falstolf. John's two oldest sons bore, oddly enough, the same Christian name as their father. After them comes another Sir William Paston, whose son Clement, a naval commander under Henry VIII, was the most distinguished member of the family. It was he who built a fine family seat at Oxnead. Clement died childless, and was succeeded by his nephew William. His heir in turn was Christopher, an idiot. Finally the property descended to the Sir Robert Paston who proposed to the House of Commons in 1664 that the King should be given a grant of two million and a half pounds for carrying on the war against the Dutch. After him the family fortunes declined, the seat at Oxnead fell into ruins and was finally sold, and with the death of William Paxton, Earl of Yarmouth, in 1732, the titles became extinct.

SIR THOMAS MALORY

Sir Thomas Malory was born about 1400 in Warwickshire. He served under the Earl of Warwick, a staunch upholder of the customs of chivalry, from whom he undoubtedly acquired much of his enthusiasm for knightly exploits. In 1445 he was a member of Parliament. He died in 1471. His *Morte Darthur* is the most famous of the Arthurian romances, and aside from the wealth of material on the Round Table and the scope of the treatment, is noteworthy as the first treatment of the subject matter in which Arthur is made the central figure. The poem is the main source of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.

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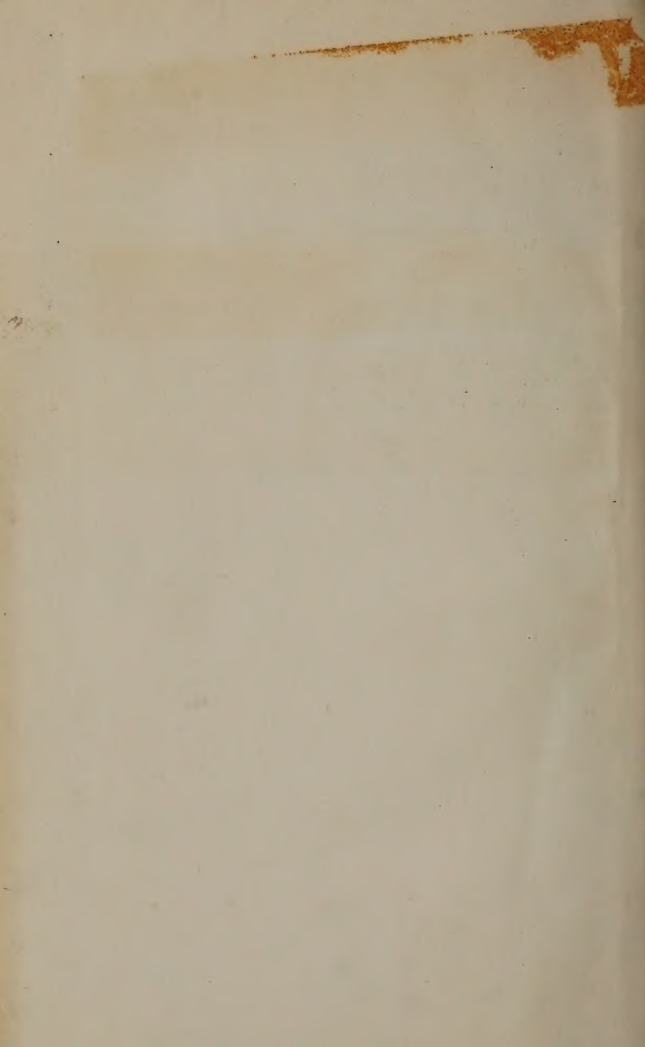
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